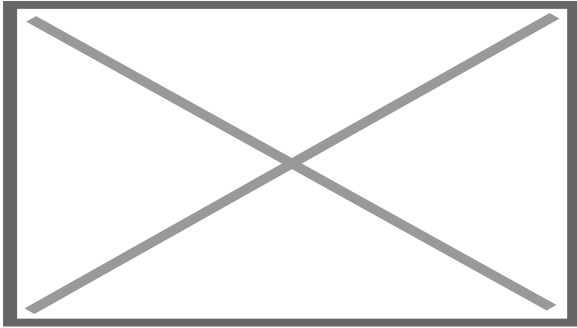


San Francisco corps changes its name to reach more of the community.



L-r: Lt. Colonel Joe Posillico, Major Fred Wong, Major Debora Wong and Lt. Colonel Dave Hudson (Photo by Karen Lim)

“Welcome to the SOMA Corps,” is what visitors will now hear when entering what was until recently The Salvation Army’s Asian American Yerba Buena Corps, in San Francisco, Calif. SOMA stands for South of Market—a name that reflects the corps’ desire to reach out to everyone in the neighborhood.

The new title—chosen by the corps council and the congregation—will show less discrimination and, instead, appeal to a larger portion of the surrounding area, according to Major Debora Wong, corps officer with her husband Frederick.

“It’s opening up. It’s changing with the purpose of reaching out,” Wong said.

Language is a priority, especially to the first generation Chinese immigrants who make up 90 percent of the congregation—of which 25 percent speak their native tongue. To address this, Sundays include a first service in Chinese and a second service in English.

The name change will not alter the dual format.

“We are not changing who we are, but we are changing how others may view us,” Wong said. “We will still be a Chinese American corps...but we pray that others of ‘any kind’ will feel more welcome and more a part of our family.”

A celebration ceremony took place on Nov. 7, 2010, to inaugurate the change. Lt. Colonel David Hudson, secretary for personnel for the Western Territory, was guest speaker. His wife, Sharron, accompanied him.

Lt. Colonels Joe and Shawn Posillico, division leaders for the Golden State Division, also attended the commemoration.