

Soldier numbers rise in the West



Statistics show evidence of growth in Western Territory.

By Karen Gleason and Amy Jorgens

Soldiership numbers are rising in the Western Territory.

After noting an increase in both senior and junior soldier enrollments early this year, New Frontier contacted the territorial program department with the question: Is The Salvation Army in the West beginning to experience growth?

Statistics reveal a trend in soldier increases in the territory.

“Efforts like the Come Join Our Army campaign [which began in June 2007] have been helpful in securing these new soldiers,” said Territorial Commander Commissioner James Knaggs. “Recent efforts in reaching out to adult rehabilitation center beneficiaries will have a strong influence, as will our hopes to enroll soldiers at The Gathering by the General. Hallelujah!”

Two elements are involved in measuring the statistical growth of soldiers: enrollment and removal from the rolls. When the number of soldiers enrolled exceeds the number of soldiers removed, a gain occurs.

For the last three years, 2009-2011, the West had gains in both junior and senior soldiers (total gain: +253, +497 and +587; see Table 1). The four previous years, 2005-2008, showed losses in both, although the total loss of the two (junior and senior soldiers) lessened each year (-1,123, -422, -270 and -176, respectively).

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For the initial five months of program year 2011-12 (September-February), a gain of 27 in junior soldiers and 50 in senior soldiers occurred. Typically, a spurt of enrollments takes place during May-July, and this year, with the visit of General Linda Bond—former Western territorial commander—at The Gathering in June, the Western Territory may experience an unprecedented increase in soldier growth for 2012 as people seek to be enrolled by the international leader of The Salvation Army.

TABLE 1—Net gain or loss in soldiers

Soldiers	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Junior	-444	-238	-7	-166	130	221	149
Senior	-679	-184	-263	-10	123	276	438
Total	-1,123	-422	-270	-176	253	497	587

TABLE 2—Soldiers on the roll

Soldiers	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Junior	5,932	5,574	5,417	5,443	5,344	5,326	5,420
Senior	16,833	16,702	16,422	16,521	16,664	16,443	17,075
Total	22,765	22,276	21,839	21,964	22,008	21,769	22,495

The gain-loss trend does not quite reflect the growth in the number of soldiers “on the roll.” For the last seven years, junior soldiers increased in two years: 2008 and 2011; however, senior soldiers increased in three: 2008, 2009 and 2011. The increase and decrease in the yearly total of the two is driven by the senior soldier roll—as the senior roll increases, so does the sum of the junior and senior soldier rolls (see Table 2). As of February, 5,388 junior soldiers are on the roll along with 17,122 senior soldiers. If the increasing trend for the senior soldiers continues, we can expect an increase in total soldiership on the rolls at the end of the program year in September.

Making growth happen- Corps leaders consider what drives church growth.

An upswing in soldier enrollments across the Western Territory can be attributed to the intentional work of corps leaders—from day camps to assertive outreach to providing transportation.

The Long Beach (Calif.) Corps enrolled 21 junior soldiers in April, which Youth Director Lincoln Hawk credits to successful community outreach and relevant youth programming. The corps’ “To Be Like Jesus” program teaches kids how to live like Jesus through hands-on activities structured around the Gospels. The majority of the local kids come to the corps through its summer day camp, “Summer’s

C.O.O.L. (Changing Outlooks On Life), which the corps has held for two years with the help of a T.L. Williams grant.

“Through both of these programs the children have been really grounded in basic Christianity and Salvation Army history and beliefs, making the step toward becoming junior soldiers fairly easy for them,” Hawk said. “They are excited to become, most importantly, committed to Christ and secondly, committed to serving him through The Salvation Army.”

Among other enrollments, the Pasco (Wash.) Temple Corps, led by Majors Julio and Karen Vasquez, added 24 senior soldiers and four junior soldiers to its rolls in March, while in Oceanside, Calif., Corps Officers Lts. Jay and Ashley Koebel enrolled eight junior soldiers.

“We attribute this growth to tons of prayer, willing soldiers, new and supportive lay leadership, and assertive community outreach,” said Jay Koebel.

The Reno (Nev.) Corps, led by Majors Michael and Janene Zielinski, lengthened its roster on April 29 with 22 new junior soldiers, seven adherents and one new senior soldier. A van ministry providing transportation is driving growth in Reno.

“This has helped to double our junior soldier membership in the last six months,” said Janene Zielinski. “The parents are even riding along in the vans!”

Offering adherency as a viable and attainable church membership option is also helping to grow the corps. “People (young families) are responding by the boatload,” she said. “They are thrilled to be accepted, valued and not judged for where they are in their spiritual walk at the moment.”