

Women's ministries reveal six priorities

by Lt. Colonel Janice Buchanan –

As our territory works together to direct all aspects of program and service toward effective mission, we are focusing on the six key priorities. Since Women's Ministries is already programmatically developed, it naturally leads us to make the most of these exact concepts.

The following provides a brief look at each of the priorities, as seen through the Women's Ministries program.

1. Make the field a priority

When we think of the field, we are focusing on both the corps and the community. Women's Ministries is a program that specifically a) targets the practical and spiritual needs of women, b) values relational interaction and c) provides effective practical and spiritual ministry.

At the field level, we can look for and encourage some of these indicators:

- Officers, local officers, and employees appropriately invest in Women's Ministries opportunities as a regular part of their week.
- Women are provided weekly and other regular opportunities to experience a meaningful Women's Ministries fellowship—a place where they can belong and develop in body, mind, and spirit.
- There is a balance of evangelism and discipleship realized, as women and their families experience salvation and become soldiers or adherents.
- Officers, local officers, and program staff report feeling supported by DHQ and THQ.

2. Promote holistic ministry

The founding leaders of the original Women's Ministries program, targeting the needs of women in the community, were visionary and clearly holistic in approach from the very beginning. The program was developed to reach out to the ragged edge of human deprivation and to promote social and spiritual transformation through incarnational ministry (Christ personified in the world through his servants). Those early program elements provided an integrated approach that honors the whole person. Today, we continue to work prescriptively offering a wide spectrum of Women's Ministries program menu items that address social, physical, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional needs. Recognizing women's



felt needs (their own perception of their need), program designs also encompass real needs and eternal needs.

At the field level we can look for and encourage some of these indicators:

- Officers, local officers, and employees have done an assessment of the needs of women within their corps and community area—they are clear about the ragged edge of human deprivation within their geographical boundaries. They are also aware of the various existing Christian community services and are knowledgeable about which needs are already being addressed and what yet remain as critical unmet needs.
- Officers, local officers, and employees have developed a heart burden for the women of the community—recognizing that these span various age groups and various ethnic groups.
- Officers, local officers, and employees have set short, median, and long term goals as to how Salvation Army Women's Ministries leadership and programs can be progressively developed in order to adequately address identified needs.
- Officers, local officers, and employees will actively network with other Christian groups. They will play an important role in affirming community action toward providing ministries to women and developing resources of funds, facilities, and leadership in order to work toward goal fulfillment.
- There will be evidence that Women's Ministries program efforts are producing social transformation and spiritual health, as prescriptive designs meet the integrated needs of the various groups they serve.
- When a Women's Ministries program(s) is not producing effective outcomes for those it serves, there is recognizable effort given to restructure that program(s) until effective holistic ministry is realized.

3. Make Ministry to Youth a Priority

Women's Ministries groups have traditionally understood the importance of mentoring, nurturing, teaching, and investing in the youth of the corps and community. Often, special projects have targeted financial, practical, and leadership support for various youth programs. Women's Ministries outreach programs are especially designed in some corps to target the felt needs of teen women, addressing various aspects of their challenging transition into womanhood.

At the field level we can look for and encourage some of these indicators:

- Officers, local officers, and employees regularly consider ways to link spiritually mature Women's Ministries participants with opportunities to mentor and support youth through established corps programs.
- Officers, local officers, and employees will invite suitable Women's Ministries participants to serve as volunteers for corps community outreach programs that provide ministry to youth.
- Financial support is offered to resource youth programs.
- An investment in individual corps youth provides life enrichment that may not otherwise be possible.
- Where there is an obvious need for a Women's Ministries teen women's group, the officers, local officers, and employees will work to develop the necessary program, resources, and leadership.

4. Cast a Global Vision

The fundamental purpose of Women's Ministries is to win women for Christ, encourage spiritual growth, provide Christian fellowship, and promote a purposeful living. As we develop women toward

more purposeful lives we challenge them to work toward the betterment of the home, the community, the nation, and the world. Helping women develop a personal sense of global vision has historically been a strong program factor in two important ways: a) Providing Women's Ministries programs that target cultural diversities in the community, and b) Mobilizing resources to support Salvation Army World Services.

At the field level we might look for and encourage some of these indicators:

- Officers, local officers, and employees are responsive to the cultural needs of their community. They set goals and take the necessary action steps to provide Women's Ministries programs that meet these needs appropriately.
- Officers, local officers, and employees encourage and engender a social environment of education, exchange, and acceptance of cultural differences within all Women's Ministries participants.
- Leadership from various ethnic groups is integrated throughout Women's Ministries opportunities.
- Women's Ministries participants are being nurtured in the concept of becoming world citizens. This includes an active introduction to the Partners in Mission IHQ Scheme, which offers a personal linkage with a grant-aided territory. Each command has its own assigned territory. Women's Ministries groups will be engaged in learning about the Salvation Army work in that territory and creating opportunities to make personal contact with Home League and Women's Ministries members and participants. They will be encouraged to learn about the needs of the people, to pray, and to participate in personal and sacrificial giving.
- World Services targets will be discussed with the participants and introduced in such a manner that they understand that this is not just a program requirement but an opportunity to make a purposeful contribution to the world that will save lives, educate, feed, house, cloth, and evangelize those who have little opportunity without our help.

5. Identify, Train and Develop Leaders

The diverse needs of women in this era of modernity present the greatest challenge in Salvation Army history. It is a time in which we are now challenged to attempt to design a menu of Women's Ministries opportunities that will adequately address this continuum of needs and also effectively staff the required leadership. The days of one program fits all are gone—the one leader manages all is no longer possible. Yet, this new day presents visionary opportunities that can be realized through an active identification and training of leaders from within the corps and from the community at large.

At the field level we can look for and encourage some of these indicators:

- Officers, local officers, and employees will not allow the vision and need for advancing Women's Ministries program opportunities to be limited by an apparent lack of leadership. Instead, goals and action steps will be planned to identify and train the required, leadership from within the corps and the community.
- While the officer will take an active leadership role in developing Women's Ministries programs, she will resist the enticement to be the leader herself, expending all her energy into a single program. Instead, she will work to recruit, disciple, and train a team of leaders. She will envision a full spectrum of Women's Ministries program options and work toward a reasonable implementation plan.
- Officers, local officers, and employees will attend divisional and territorial leadership training sessions to enhance creativity in developing skills to recruit and train leaders.

- Officers, local officers, and employees will demonstrate and model joy in leadership. They will inspire, invite, encourage, train, and mentor others to also aspire to leadership.

6. Direct Resources to Mission

Resource allocation and managed budgets strengthen the delivery of ministry and service to the women who participate in the various Women's Ministries. It is logical that program outcomes justify the investment of financial, material, and human resources. We want to put our resources to work in such a way that we can experience the greatest measure of expected outcomes. Strategic response to fiscal problems involves evaluation and consideration of long-term solutions. We want our investment in the mission of Women's Ministries to bring about spiritual conversion, assimilation into the local corps, social transformation, purposeful living, and the betterment of the home, the community, the nation, and the world. Each separate Women's Ministries program or group needs to be involved in fiscal management.

At the field level we can look for and encourage some of these indicators:

- Officers, local officers, and employees will plan an adequate budget(s) for the envisioned Women's Ministries programs, outreach, and projects for the fiscal year. Equal attention will be given to income sources as well as projected expenses.
- Creative and strategic planning will insure fiscal attention to facility use and implementation of any corps transportation services. Free community service facilities and resources will also be appropriately utilized.
- Where certain Women's Ministries programs meet community service needs that match grant requirements, grant applications are written and submitted as stipulated.
- The greatest resources of funds, goods, facility, transportation, etc., will be directed to the programs that result in the greatest outcomes.
- Women's Ministries participants will be involved in the concepts of fiscal self-support for their particular group(s). Officers, local officers, and employees will have insight into the importance of leading their participants to develop a sense of personal buy in and a need for fiscal responsibility to support their program(s).