

## Bell ringers sign of holiday season

By **MARY ROSEWOOD** Contributing Writer | Posted: Wednesday, November 26, 2014 12:47 pm

The merry bells of Salvation Army bell ringers standing beside bright red kettles remind us that the best gift of the Christmas season is helping neighbors.

Kathy and Gregg Garnett of Liberty Hill make sure those bells keep ringing from the Friday after Thanksgiving to the Saturday before Christmas in front of the Wal-Mart store in Cedar Park.

“The reason other people come out to volunteer is like the reason Gregg and I do,” Kathy said. “It’s a matter of just doing some little thing to pay back for all the blessings that we’ve been given all our lives. We have a roof over our heads, we have food to eat, we have clothes on our back. There are people in Williamson County who don’t even have that. We’re happy, just happy, happy, to be able to pay back in some small way.

“We are inviting people in the Cedar Park community to join us in volunteering as bell ringers this year.”

The way Kathy describes it, volunteers create a celebration around the kettle. “They’ll wear a little Santa hat,” she said. “They greet the people, and the kids are allowed to ring the bell. It’s just a very happy time. We’ve had nothing but a great experience from this.”

Volunteers might be pampered by passers-by who bring them hot chocolate and coffee. But what really warms the heart, Kathy said, is knowing you are doing something for a neighbor.

“Last year I remember this poor woman,” Kathy said. “I could tell she didn’t have a lot of money. And she shoved money into the kettle, and she said, ‘I swore that when the Salvation Army helped me out, I would always be there for them too.’ I was just taken back by that. The Salvation Army has helped so many individuals, and then they just want to give back.”

In 2013 \$7,000 was collected in the Cedar Park kettles. This year Kathy hopes they can raise more, especially because the money collected will go directly to provide support for people in Williamson County in great need. The Red Kettle goal for all of Travis and Williamson Counties this year is



### Salvation Army

Liberty Hill resident Kathy Garnett is a familiar face to shoppers at Cedar Park’s Wal-Mart store, as one of the Salvation Army’s faithful volunteers each holiday season.

\$350,000, and donations stay local.

“Every dime that people drop in those kettles goes right to somebody in their own community,” Kathy said.

During disasters, such as the 2013 massive flooding south of Austin in Onion Creek, the Salvation Army sets up canteens and shelter for victims and support personnel, providing whatever is required.

Throughout the year and in a variety of ways, the Salvation Army helps where they can.

Bell ringers only need to bring a smile. Anyone 16 and older can do this important job. Parents can bring a child, and sometimes a well-behaved dog accompanies a volunteer.

Shifts are normally two hours, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, but can be adjusted.

“If someone wants to work fifteen minutes, we will accommodate them, just so they can have that feeling that they have given something back,” Kathy said.

To volunteer, go to the Salvation Army website at <http://www.salvationarmyaustin.org/austin/volunteer-opportunities> and scroll down the list to find Wal-Mart Cedar Park.

The Salvation Army in Austin serves more than 400,000 men, women and children a year through its twelve locations in Travis and Williamson Counties, providing basic needs, shelter, employment services and rehabilitation. For more information please visit our website at [www.salvationarmyAUSTIN.org](http://www.salvationarmyAUSTIN.org), find us at [Facebook.com/SalvationArmyAustin](https://www.facebook.com/SalvationArmyAustin) or [@SalArmyAustin](https://twitter.com/SalArmyAustin).

The Salvation Army, an evangelical part of the universal Christian church established in 1865, has been supporting those in need in His name without discrimination for 130 years in the United States. Nearly 30 million Americans receive assistance from The Salvation Army each year through the broadest array of social services that range from providing food for the hungry, relief for disaster survivors, assistance for the disabled, outreach to the elderly and ill, clothing and shelter to the homeless and opportunities for underprivileged children. 82 cents of every dollar spent is used to carry out those services in 5,000 communities nationwide. For more information, go to [www.salvationarmyusa.org](http://www.salvationarmyusa.org).