

Lawyers Giving Back - Amy Fellows Cline and the Salvation Army

by Christina Hansen

On December 10, 2016, a blustery Saturday, roughly two weeks before Christmas, Amy Fellows Cline (Triplett, Woolf & Garretson, L.L.C.) and her children stood outside the bustling Cabela's store on Greenwich Road. Wrapped in parkas, scarves, and Santa hats to combat the blustery conditions, Cline, Ethan and Olivia stood next to a bright red Salvation Army kettle, greeting shoppers and cheerfully wishing a "Merry Christmas!" to every passerby who made a donation.

Though she likely did not stop to reflect on it, Cline's journey to that moment actually began almost exactly sixteen years earlier. In 2000, she was just starting her legal career and was a newly minted member of the WBA Young Lawyers Section. The group was planning its annual holiday party and looking for a new organization that could benefit from the generosity of the local bar. After careful deliberation, the young



Amy Fellows Cline and her children, Ethan and Olivia, collecting donations for the Salvation Army outside the Wichita Cabela's store on December 10, 2016.

lawyers chose as its new partner the Salvation Army Homeless Services, administered by the Salvation Army Wichita City Command. When Cline attended the annual parties held at the organization's Emergency Lodge, she experienced first-hand the organization's dedication to Wichita's homeless community.

Cline's involvement with the Salvation Army steadily grew beyond her participation as a Young Lawyer. By 2008, she had proven herself to be a passionate supporter of

the organization, and was invited to join the Salvation Army's Homeless Services Advisory Council. "I jumped at the chance," Cline said. "I saw it as an opportunity to get more involved and make a difference in people's lives."

The Council's function is to offer guidance on a wide range of issues affecting the Emergency Lodge. At any given meeting, Cline and her fellow Council

members might begin by discussing strategies for tackling the employment barriers facing residents, and end by formulating sterilization procedures to keep bed bugs out of the facility.

Cline's work with the Council has shattered any preconceptions she once had of the homeless population. Cline said that getting to know the residents of the Emergency Lodge has "really cemented that the most common causes [of homelessness] are circumstantial and beyond people's control." As one example, Cline explained that health issues are a frequent contributor to homelessness. A serious medical condition or substance abuse can clean out the sufferer's savings account and prevent him or her from working. Further exacerbating the issue is the fact that many of these individuals do not have a family or any type of support system they can turn to for help.

The mission of Salvation Army Homeless Services has evolved in recent years. After years of offering



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emergency shelter to the homeless for a maximum of 30 days, the organization made the decision several years ago to shift its focus to providing long-term transitional housing for homeless families. Resident families could live at the Lodge for up to one year, giving children important stability and allowing the adults to save money, pay off debts, and receive training in various employment and life skills.

However, the facility reverted to an emergency shelter due to funding cuts equaling \$330,000 in 2015 as a result of a shift in focus at the federal level. The Lodge is once again focused on providing emergency shelter and rapid re-housing within 30 days of a resident entering the facility. Salvation Army Homeless Services simultaneously administers a program to provide permanent housing for people with a dual-diagnosis of persistent mental illness and substance abuse.

Even with the shift in focus back to emergency shelter, about half of the Lodge's residents at any given time are children - a fact that really hits home with Cline. This is one of the primary reasons she regularly brings her children along when she volunteers. "I want my kids to realize that these kids could be anybody - it could be them," Cline said. "But for the grace of God, we could be there. I don't want my kids to grow up with any stereotypes."

Cline encourages other WBA members to get involved with the Salvation Army, and not just at Christmas. There is no shortage of fun volunteer opportunities for individuals or groups, and Cline said that a few volunteer hours can make a big difference in the lives of children living at the Lodge.

Several other local attorneys are already pitching in. Robert Moody

(Martin, Pringle, Oliver, Wallace & Bauer, L.L.P.) has helped throw several birthday parties at the Emergency Lodge. At one such party, a little boy, who was staying at the Lodge, revealed that it was the first birthday party he had ever had. Jennifer Magana (City Attorney) and Jennifer Horchem (Slawson Companies, Inc.) helped Cline provide interview skills training and mock interviews for residents.

Volunteers are always needed to organize holiday and birthday parties, provide transportation, and assist with group outings - all of which amount to an experience that is not only rewarding, but just plain fun. Cline has helped transport residents to the Sedgwick County Zoo, and once took a group of residents to watch the WBA Bar Show dress rehearsal. One year Cline took her daughter's Girl Scout troop to the Lodge for an Easter party, where the girls decorated eggs with the resident children.

If you are short on time, Cline said you can support the Salvation Army with a monetary donation or by contributing needed items such as groceries, bed linens and bus passes. The Homeless Services Advisory Council is always brainstorming a wide variety of service-type opportunities, so if you have a particular area of expertise or knowledge that could benefit the

organization or its residents, Cline's plea is simple: speak up!

While the substantial cuts in funding have created a daunting challenge for Salvation Army Homeless Services, Cline said staff members', volunteers' and the Council members' dedication to their mission has not waned. Cline credits these men and women, and the residents themselves, for keeping her passion alive. She promises that WBA members who donate of their time, talents, and resources will be similarly blown away. "You'll see the direct impact of your time and money. When you volunteer, you can see it on the residents' faces. Every dime we raise, that will go to something that is needed."

For anyone doubting their faith in humanity after a particularly bruising and divisive 2016, Cline said she is continually amazed at the kindness and generosity she has witnessed as a volunteer for the Salvation Army. "It's nice to know you live in a community where people will give that much to people they don't know - people they will never meet," Cline said. "It will warm your heart."

Anyone that is interested in getting involved or learning more about the Salvation Army's mission can contact Cline at amycline@twgfirm.com.

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