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THE SALVATION ARMY WELCOMES NEW OFFICERS TO HAWAII COUNTY CORPS

HILO, HI (August 3, 2026) – The Salvation Army Hawaiian & Pacific Islands Division welcomed new leadership at two of its Hawai'i County corps community centers in July, with Captains Steven and Romelia Howard joining the Kona Corps and Captain Joy Groenleer returning to the islands to lead the Honoka'a Corps. Captains Sam and Felicia LeMar, who serve as Hawaii County coordinators in addition to their roles as Hilo Temple Corps officers, are guiding the organization's coordinated efforts across the island.

"We're excited for the experience these officers bring to their new appointments on Hawaii Island," said Captain Sam LeMar. "Each of them brings a wealth of ministry and community service experience, and together, it allows us to serve the whole county as one body of The Salvation Army."

Kona Corps: Captains Steven and Romelia Howard

Captains Steven and Romelia Howard have been appointed corps officers of the Kona Corps, where they will oversee the corps' church services and social services, including the 'Ohana Keiki Preschool.

Captains Howard were commissioned as Salvation Army officers in 2016 and they arrive in Kona with nine years of experience as corps officers of the Kahului Corps on Maui, where they also served as Maui County coordinators. During that time, they also oversaw The Salvation Army thrift stores in Lahaina and Kihei. Their tenure included some of the corps' most demanding seasons, including the response to the 2023 Lahaina wildfires, when Captain Steven Howard represented The Salvation Army at the Emergency Command Center as the organization helped coordinate meals for thousands of displaced residents. Captain Romelia Howard built a strong record of direct outreach, leading weekly efforts to bring food, clothing and spiritual care to homeless individuals and families, and forging community partnerships to expand access to services.

Before entering full-time ministry, Captain Steven Howard spent more than 20 years in the private sector, holding leadership roles in electronics, information technology and technical support, and managing complex systems in the hospitality industry. Captain Romelia Howard built a career in

early childhood and K-12 education, teaching for more than 15 years at both the elementary and high school levels. She holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education, along with master's degrees in special education and library media, giving her a strong foundation in literacy, individualized learning and student support.

"We're honored to join the Kona community," said Captain Steve Howard. "We look forward to getting to know our neighbors here and continuing the work of meeting real needs with real compassion."

The Salvation Army's Kona Corps 'Ohana Keiki Preschool is a fully licensed early childhood education program and is now accepting enrollment for the 2026-2027 school year. For more information, contact the preschool at (808) 326-7780.

Honoka'a Corps: Captain Joy Groenleer

Captain Joy Groenleer has been appointed corps officer of the The Salvation Army's Honoka'a Corps, marking her return to Hawai'i after 15 years of assignments elsewhere. She was commissioned as a Salvation Army officer in 2013. Her prior service includes appointments at the Hanapepe and Lihue Corps on Kaua'i, the Las Vegas Citadel Corps, and several roles at the College for Officer Training in California, including personnel officer, family care director, education officer and assistant training principal.

The daughter of plantation workers who immigrated from the Philippines, Captain Joy grew up in Kekaha on Kaua'i and graduated from Waimea High School. She earned a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and an M.A. in Biblical and Theological Studies from Trevecca Nazarene University in Nashville. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, running, playing the ukulele and watching musicals. She is eager to serve the corps and community in Honoka'a.

"I'm coming home to Hawai'i with a full heart," said Captain Joy Groenleer. "There's so much potential here in Honoka'a, and I can't wait to get to work alongside this community."

In addition to leading worship and outreach at the corps, Captain Joy will oversee The Salvation Army Thrift Store in Honoka'a. She said she is especially looking forward to reinvigorating youth programs in Honoka'a, starting with the launch of Friday youth nights at the corps.

About Salvation Army Officers

Salvation Army officers are commissioned ministers of The Salvation Army, an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church. Officers receive their assignments from The Salvation Army Territorial Headquarters in Rancho Palos Verdes, California, which is also home to the officer training college. Officers are trained to lead worship services, community programs and a wide range of social services. The Salvation Army's mission which is motivated by the love of God, is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination.

About The Salvation Army Hawai'i County



The Salvation Army Hawaii County encompasses three corps community centers — Kona Corps, Honoka‘a Corps and Hilo Temple Corps — along with Family Intervention Services, a multi-faceted program led by executive director Roxanne Costa that serves at-risk youth on Hawai‘i Island and Maui. The Salvation Army Family Intervention Services includes Community Based Outreach and Case Advocacy, the Big Island Juvenile Intake and Assessment Center, and youth emergency shelters in Hilo and Kona and Safehouses: Ke Kama Pono and Kanehoalani for boys and Noho Olu for girls, along with life-skill building, transitional housing and independent living support for youth working toward a stable future. Hilo Temple Corps also operates the Overnight Safe Space, a low-barrier emergency shelter serving Hawai‘i Island's houseless community.

VISUALS: Photos of Captains Steven and Romelia Howard and Captain Joy Groenleer available [HERE](#) (courtesy of The Salvation Army).

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About The Salvation Army – Hawaiian & Pacific Islands Division

The Salvation Army Hawaiian & Pacific Islands Division covers the state of Hawai‘i and the Pacific Islands including Guam, The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Republic of the Marshall Islands and The Federated States of Micronesia. The Division offers a wide variety of programs throughout the islands including: affordable senior housing; at-risk youth services and housing; camp & conference center; family stores; food distribution and feeding programs; homeless services; The Kroc Center – Hawai‘i’s largest community center; preschools & day care services; social services – emergency assistance; substance abuse treatment; and work therapy & rehabilitation services. For more information, call 808-988-2136, visit hawaii.salvationarmy.org, and follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.