

# HANDS AND HEARTS OF TEXAS

Guided by Faith, Driven by Service.



## TEXAS SERVICE EXTENSION

*Hands and Hearts of Texas – Guided by Faith, Driven by Service*

### A Christmas Blessing: Hope in the Storm

As a young mother of four, Elizabeth found herself at a critical juncture in life, faced with the daunting decision to either give up or persevere. An accident had left her with an injury, and she was now surviving on workers' compensation. The fixed income barely covered the bare necessities, with food stamps filling the gap for food expenses. The prospect of Christmas seemed bleak, with her children also needing winter clothes for the harsh El Paso winter. The cold wind would cut through her coat, chilling her bones, and she dreaded the thought of her children facing it unprepared on their daily walk to school.

Elizabeth's mother had noticed the effect of her medication which helped to ease the pain, but often left Elizabeth unconscious for hours, leaving her children unattended. With her mother's guidance, Elizabeth disposed of the medication and ventured out to Walmart to gather supplies, crossing a highway on foot in the biting winter chill. As she stood in the median, waiting for a break in traffic, the weight of her struggles bore down on her.

The despair was overwhelming, and as an 18-wheeler approached, a sinister thought crept in—ending it all might be the solution. Yet, a gust of wind from another passing truck seemed to whisper, "Help is on the way." It was enough to stir Elizabeth from her trance, and she continued her journey home, feeling defeated but alive.

Later, as the winter storm began to descend, her sister arrived with her children, seeking refuge from the cold. They gathered in her small, chaotic living room, where clothes hung drying on makeshift lines. Her mind spiraled into darker thoughts, but a firm knock at the door interrupted her despair. It was the pastor from a church she had occasionally attended. He offered a prayer and an envelope. Inside was not just a card, but three crisp \$100 bills. She smiled in joyous disbelief as she realized her immediate needs could now be met. Her children would have the warm clothes they needed, and there was even enough for a few toys. Their home was filled with laughter and relief.



**Sergeant Elizabeth Aranguren**

Cleburne Service Center Director

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*"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Psalm 1:3*

This unexpected blessing changed everything. It was a reminder that even in our darkest moments, when we feel undeserving and alone, there is always hope. The kindness of a pastor, braving a winter storm to deliver not just material aid but also a message of love and support, renewed Elizabeth's faith. Help can come in the most unexpected ways, and sometimes, we just need to hold on a little longer to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

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## GET TO KNOW THE FACES BEHIND SERVICE EXTENSION AND THEIR COMMITMENT TO SERVICE

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In honor of Women's History, we continue to spotlight women making a difference across Texas in the juvenile probation field. Today, we proudly recognize Chief Juvenile Probation Officer Christi Gonzales of Winkler County. Chief Gonzales served 8 years in law enforcement before continuing her dedication to youth and families through juvenile probation for the last eleven years. Since 2019, she has served as the West Region Representative for JJAT, contributing on various committees and serving as Past West Region President. She is also active in her community as Salvation Army Kermit SEU Treasurer since 2018 and through the Kermit Chamber of Commerce.



As a high school dropout and teen mother, she overcame adversity to raise two successful adult sons and is now a proud GG to her two precious grandchildren. Please join us in honoring Chief Gonzales for her years of service and for being a woman making history in juvenile justice across Texas.

"Chief Juvenile Probation Officer Christi Gonzales is an asset to The Salvation Army and the Kermit community - well deserved recognition!"

-John Green (Region 6 Representative)

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## SERVICE EXTENSION PROGRAM

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Our Mission: The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church. Its message is based on the Bible. Its ministry is motivated by the love of God. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination. The Salvation Army's Service Extension Program spreads the mission of The Salvation Army to those Texas towns and cities that do not have a building or center run by a uniformed Salvation Army officer. These locations are Service Extension Units. With more than 230 Salvation Army Service Extension Units to run its program and to provide emergency assistance for people in crisis locally.



STEPHEN THOMAS  
DIVISIONAL SERVICE  
EXTENSION DIRECTOR

### **Programs available include:**

- Emergency Assistance
- Referral Services
- Gap extended stay shelter program
- Christmas Programs
- Summer Camp & Tween Retreat
- Emergency Disaster Services
- Volunteer
- Donation opportunities

Please ask your local representative about the programs available in your county.

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## DISCOVER STORIES OF IMPACT AND OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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### Community Spotlight: A Very Special Easter at Springtown Villa

This past Wednesday, April 1st, the spirit of the season was in full bloom as The Salvation Army San Marcos headed over to the Springtown Villa Senior Housing complex to host a heartwarming Easter celebration.

For many of the seniors at this Housing Authority site, holidays can be a quiet time; management shared that many residents live on very fixed incomes and rarely receive outside visitors. That's exactly why The Salvation Army has made it a mission to bring the party to them.

### A Feast Fit for a King (and 70 Residents!)

The afternoon was a massive success, with 70 residents coming together to share a meal and some much-needed laughs. The spread was a true community effort, featuring a "Frito Pie" style feast of sandwiches, nacho cheese, and chili, followed by a mountain of desserts ranging from homemade pies to Rice Krispie treats.

### A Huge Thank You to Our "Kitchen Crew":

None of this would have been possible without the generous contributions from the Board and local partners:

- The Main Course: Meat provided by Norma Kessinger, James Bryant (meat and cheese), and bread from Neil Broussard.
- The Signature Dish: A huge pot of chili whipped up by Shirley Rivers.
- The Toppings: Fresh lettuce, tomatoes, and onions from Lupe Costilla.
- The Sweet Stuff: Delicious desserts provided by Board Chair John Lyon.
- The Logistics: Serving containers were previously donated by our local Walmart, who also provided the donations used by the apartment manager to craft special Easter gifts for every attendee.

### More Than Just a Meal

The Salvation Army has become a familiar face at Springtown Villa, having hosted the "Silver Bells" event there for the past three years. Seeing the excitement on the residents' faces proves that while the food is great, the company is what truly matters.

A special shout-out to Service Center Manager Lisa Cruz and our hardworking Board Members—Shirley Rivers, Karen McGowan, and Neil Broussard—who spent their afternoon serving meals and chatting with the residents.



Norma M. (Property Manager) Leno P., and Pricilla C. (Resident Coordinator)

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# MEET OUR DEDICATED SERVICE EXTENSION REPRESENTATIVES



JULIE GAUCIN  
REGION 1

NIMCHIE ALCE  
REGION 2

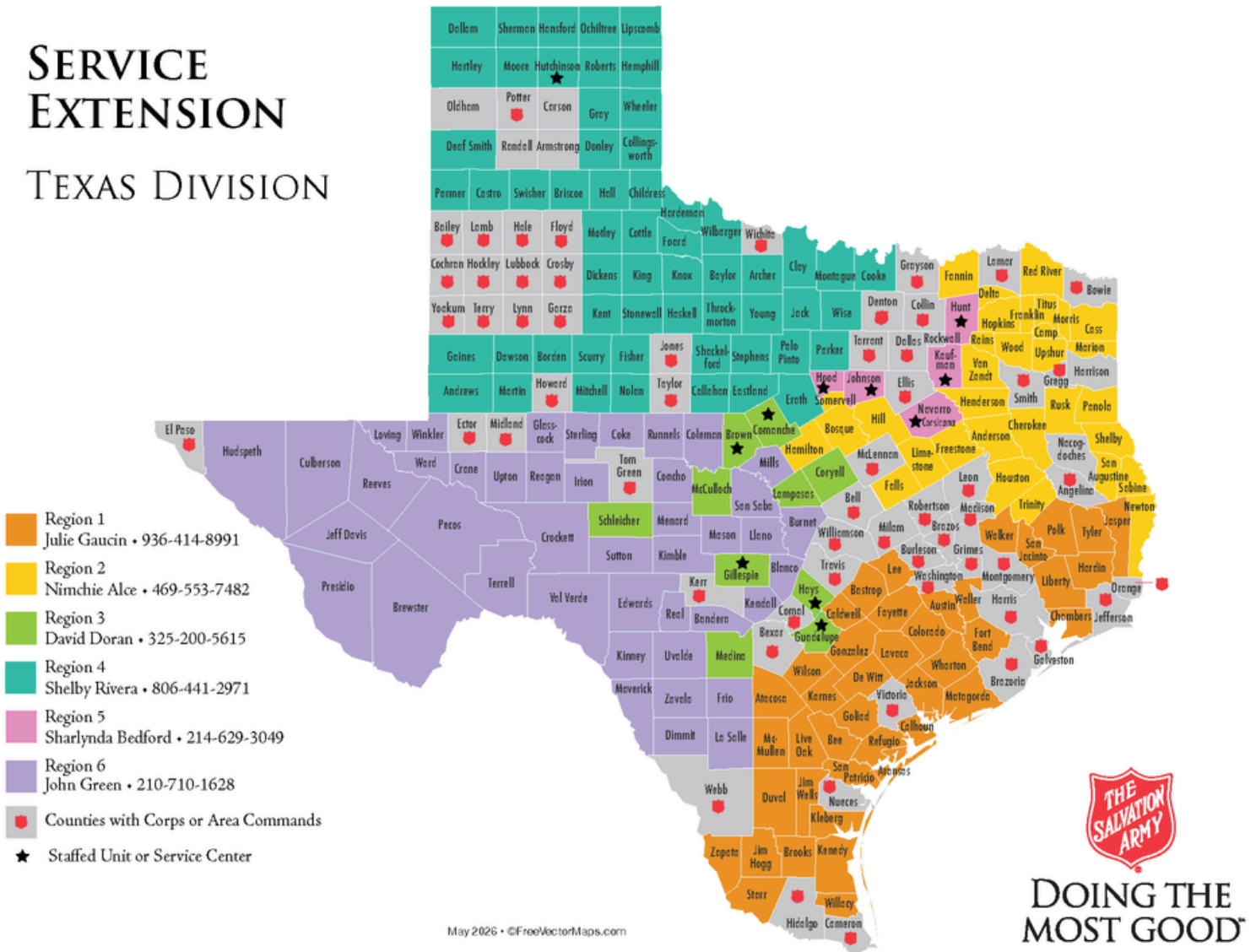
DAVID DORAN  
REGION 3

SHELBY RIVERA  
REGION 4

SHARLYNDA  
BEDFORD  
REGION 5

JOHN GREEN  
REGION 6

## SERVICE EXTENSION TEXAS DIVISION



DOING THE MOST GOOD™