**Celebrate Donut Day!**

The Salvation Army performed many acts of service to American servicemen during World War One. They wrote letters home to loved ones, they operated small canteens providing creature comforts, they led Sunday services and other evangelistic outreach that provided much needed spiritual support. But it was the donut-making ministry, by far, that eclipsed everything else and caused The Army’s war work to rise in prominence and reputation.

**The Donut Girls**

Though by war’s end there would be a couple hundred female officers and soldiers given the nickname, “Donut Girl or Lassie”, the reason they were given the moniker was because of the innovation of Ensign Helen Purviance and Ensign Margaret Sheldon. They had the idea of baking something to offer the soldiers. Originally, they tried to make pies but did not have the baking materials needed or enough ingredients. Sheldon, who was a former Slum Sister, suggested they try donuts. Purviance formed the dough into a circular shape with a baking-power can and made the holes using a camphor ice tube. The first US soldier to eat a Salvation Army donut was Private Braxton Zuber of Alabama. A joke was exchanged between Zuber and the female officers that if the donut did not kill Zuber, they would go on making them. Zuber survived the first donut prototype, and the ‘Donut Lassie’ was born.

Salvation Army historian Edward McKinley notes, “The doughnut proved ideally suited both to the insatiable craving of the troops for hot, fresh homemade treats and to field conditions in France, where the chronic shortage of field stoves, pans, and supplies made it difficult to produce more elaborate baked goods such as pies and cakes. Doughnuts could be produced in large numbers in lard melted in any sort of pot or bucket, placed over a fire built in a hole dug in the ground, while hot chocolate and coffee to go along could be made in galvanized trash cans heated over the same heat source.”

As G.I.’s wrote letters home, lauding the practical ministry of the Donut Girls, a grateful American public began to take more notice of The Salvation Army and its work. Although, The Salvation Army had been operating in the US since 1880, by the start of World War One it was still very much a fledgling organization. That changed as news of the Donut Girls and other examples of heroic Salvation Army service began to be circulated by newspapers back home. The picturesque Stella Young, a Salvation Army ensign from Everett, Massachusetts, became the face of the iconic Donut Girl in many newspapers and posters printed around the world.

By the time, the war finally ended on November 11, 1918, The Salvation Army had won a special place in the hearts of the American public. The loans Evangeline Booth took out at the start of the war were quickly repaid and every debt held by The Army was liquidated.

**The Donut Girls: A Lasting Legacy**

The Salvation Army’s commitment to help American personnel serving in the military did not end after World War One. When the US entered the Second World War (1939-1945) in 1942, The Salvation Army answered the call to serve once again, although this time as part of six other organizations called the United Services Organization (USO). Red Shield Clubs served military personnel overseas and, in the US, further ingratiating them to the American people.

Even today, as people drop money into a Salvation Army kettle, it is not uncommon to hear sentiments such as, “My grandfather couldn’t get over the kindness you showed him during the war,” or “The Salvation Army offered things free to soldiers while other organizations charged.” All this

is due in part to the rich, spiritual legacy passed down to us from the ‘Donut Girls’ – brave Salvation Army officers and soldiers who served God by serving others in some of the worst conditions ever known.

As one frontline soldier wrote, “It is always in the places where the boys need help and the closest hut to the lines, you’ll find is The Salvation Army.”

**Donut Day in the U.S.**

***June 4th, 2021***

In 1938 “Donut Day” was established. National Donut Day is widely celebrated on the first Friday of June. Many donut shops are known to give them out for free, giving a good reason to take some time out of the day to enjoy this most cherished treat.

**Service Project Ideas to celebrate Donut Day!**

Prepare some donuts to celebrate Donut Day while honoring the legacy of the donut girls of serving/blessing your community.

Here are some ways:

* Gather a group of bakers and try the original recipe with different toppings/glaze.
* Bring donuts to:
  + a nursing home, for their workers and volunteers.
  + to your local Firehouse or Police Station.
  + to a local community-based organization serving families with food pantry.
  + to a Veterans Home in your community.