

BEST PRACTICE FOR ENGAGING LOCAL SOCIAL MISSION UNITS

Building Meaningful Partnerships Through Service, Outreach, and Compassionate Care

Community Care Ministries (CCM) plays a vital role in expressing the love of Christ through practical service. One of the most meaningful opportunities for Corps-based CCM groups is to build partnerships with **local Salvation Army social mission units**—such as shelters, addiction recovery programs, community centres, transitional housing, and care homes.

By working together, Corps and social services can offer holistic ministry that meets both physical and spiritual needs. This guide outlines best practices for building effective partnerships and provides a list of activities, service projects, and outreach opportunities that Corps can implement.

Build Strong Relationships

Connect with leadership:

Meet with Directors, Chaplains, or Volunteer Coordinators at social mission units to understand their needs, priorities, and opportunities for partnership.

Identify service needs:

Ask what kind of support is needed—such as volunteers for meal services, facility cleanups, event assistance, or Spiritual Care programs.

Maintain regular communication:

Schedule regular check-ins (e.g., monthly or quarterly) to ensure the partnership remains active, responsive, and mutually supportive.

Offer Flexible Volunteer Opportunities

To encourage participation from a wide range of Corps members, offer opportunities that vary in length, commitment, and area of service.

One-time events:

Christmas hamper distribution, seasonal cleanups, Point-in-Time homelessness counts, or holiday caroling.

Short-term commitments:

Monthly service projects such as meal preparation, outreach street ministry, or employment workshop speaking engagements.

Ongoing involvement:

Weekly visitation programs, youth sports coaching, English Café conversation circles, mentorship initiatives, or spiritual care leadership.

For a detailed list of suggested service activities and project ideas, see the “Practical Activities and Service Projects” section later in this guide.



Volunteer Systems and Preparation

Application and screening:

Follow The Salvation Army's Ministry Worker Screening Process, including police checks and reference checks where required.

Orientation and training:

Provide basic training on trauma-informed care, privacy and confidentiality, and appropriate engagement with vulnerable individuals.

Clear role descriptions:

Define expectations clearly so that volunteers understand their role and boundaries when serving at social mission units.

Organize Joint Programs and Events

Partnerships are strengthened when Corps and social mission units collaborate on practical outreach and celebrations. Examples include:

Seasonal events:

Christmas kettles, Easter baskets, Thanksgiving meal service, and Mother's/Father's Day appreciation events.

Facility support projects:

Community cleanups, facility beautification (painting, gardening), hygiene kit assemblies, or furniture/clothing drives.

Faith-based engagement:

Lead Alpha courses, Bible studies, worship services, prayer walks, and card-writing ministries. Music ministry teams (bands, choirs, worship groups) can also offer live performances.

Encourage Corps-Wide Participation

Inclusive engagement:

Welcome individuals from across the Corps community to participate in CCM-led social mission activities, without limiting involvement to specific groups.

Intergenerational service:

Promote opportunities for people of all ages to serve together, fostering mentorship, connection, and a shared spirit of ministry.

Flexible opportunities:

Offer a variety of service roles that reflect different skills, interests, and availability, making it easy for everyone to find a way to contribute meaningfully.

Evaluate and Adapt

Gather feedback:

Invite both social mission staff and volunteers to share feedback after events and activities.

Review and adjust:

Assess participation levels and community impact, then adjust activities to better meet real needs.



Celebrate milestones:

Recognize volunteer service and highlight successes as part of strengthening the partnership.

Pray and Serve with Compassion

Prayer commitment:

Commit to regular prayer for the individuals and families being served through social mission units.

Christlike service:

Approach every act of service with humility, empathy, and the love of Christ at the center.

Ministry mindset:

Remember that CCM involvement in social mission work is not just volunteering—it is a ministry, a living extension of the Gospel in action.

Practical Activities and Service Projects for CCM and Social Mission Partnerships

Hands-on service projects

- Community cleanups and facility beautification
- Meal preparation and food service programs
- Hygiene kit or welcome package assemblies
- Furniture and clothing drives
- Winter readiness (coats, blankets, hand warmers)
- Back-to-school supply drives
- Laundry assistance for shelter residents
- Volunteer for PiT Count (Point-in-Time Counts of Homelessness):

Support national homelessness counts by volunteering to assist during evening and overnight counts, covering community areas in collaboration with Salvation Army social services teams.

Spiritual and emotional care

- Alpha Courses, Bible studies, and devotional sessions
- Visitation and prayer support
- Worship services led by Corps musicians or choirs
- Card-writing ministry for encouragement
- Guided prayer walks around social mission units
- Life skills workshops (budgeting, resume writing, cooking)
- Outreach Street Ministry:

Accompany outreach workers on street routes, offering practical support, spiritual care, and encouragement to vulnerable individuals.

Community events and seasonal projects

- Christmas hampers and holiday gift distributions
- Caroling and music outreach during holidays
- Thanksgiving and Easter meal programs
- Mother's Day and Father's Day appreciation events
- Movie nights, game nights, or social gatherings
- Barbecues, picnics, and Family Fun Days
- Volunteer appreciation celebrations

Mentorship and relationship-building

- Mentorship programs for individuals in transitional housing
- Reading and literacy support programs
- Buddy system to welcome new shelter residents
- Art, music, and creative expression workshops
- Seniors support and intergenerational connection programs
- Youth and children's engagement through recreational activities
- Employment Workshop Speaker:

Volunteer as a guest speaker sharing professional experiences, career advice, or specialized topics for employment readiness programs.

- Field Trip Helpers:

Support outings and enrichment activities in developmental programs, childcare centres, or parenting programs.

- Sports Coaches for Youth Shelters:

Volunteer as a coach or assistant to lead recreational activities, team-building sports, and fitness programs for youth in transitional housing.

- English Café Helpers:

Volunteer in English conversation circles that support newcomers and refugees in developing language skills and building community connections.

Awareness and advocacy initiatives

- Corps-wide educational workshops on homelessness, addiction, or food insecurity
- Tours of Salvation Army social mission units to deepen understanding
- Corps bulletin features and awareness campaigns
- Advocacy through letter-writing campaigns and public awareness events
- Community Advisory Council Participation:

Serve as a representative from the Corps to offer feedback, insight, and volunteer support as part of local advisory councils that guide Salvation Army social mission units.

Conclusion

By expanding opportunities for engagement, including PIT Counts, outreach ministry, mentorship programs, workshops, and newcomer support—CCM groups can bridge the gap between Corps and social mission units in practical, relational, and spiritually grounded ways.

Through acts of service, connection, and compassionate care, volunteers live out the mission of The Salvation Army: to share the love of Jesus Christ, meet human needs, and be a transforming influence in the communities we serve.