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CASE STUDY

Case Study: Salvation Army Great Lakes Division Shows Impact

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We talked with two marketing pros from The Salvation Army Great Lakes Division—Christina Holman, the director of integrated marketing and mail, and Anna Davenport, digital marketing specialist, about challenges they face, how they use Rally, and tips for keywords.

What They Do:

The Salvation Army meets physical, emotional, and spiritual needs throughout the community. Through programs that serve the body, mind and soul, The Salvation Army provides pathways out of poverty, empowers youth, equips families, combats addiction, and more.

Learn more:

SAGreatLakes.org

Founded:

The Salvation Army's work in the Detroit area dates back to 1887, but the Great Lakes Division was formed in 2022 after a merger between the Eastern and Western Michigan Divisions.

2.4 MILLION

Meals served in Metro Detroit last year

ABOUT

The Salvation Army Great Lakes Division works throughout Michigan to help people in need. They're feeding people, providing shelter, and responding to disasters. They work through 45 corps community centers offering a multitude of resources including food pantries, financial assistance, resources, sports, kids programming, summer day camps, and more.

Notably, The Great Lakes Division started the Bed and Bread Club mobile feeding program in 1987 that has served as a model for the Salvation Army nationally.

"I like getting text messages from other nonprofits that show the impact of what my donation is doing"

-Christina Holman

CHALLENGES

Funding after the pandemic:

Unlike many nonprofits, the Salvation Army saw donations increase during the pandemic. “It was really similar to emergency disaster type fundraising, like when you have a hurricane or tornado,” said Holman. “It was just an amazing result.”

Younger donors:

Like many nonprofits, reaching younger donors has been a challenge. The Salvation Army created an advisory board of young people called Echelon to help them connect with the next generation. “We’re trying to put together these fundraising and volunteer opportunities for that group,” Holman said. “Even if they’re not donors now, maybe in the future they’ll be interested.”

Inflation:

The impact of rising inflation is a double whammy for the Salvation Army, causing an increase in need and a decrease in donations. “We’ve actually done some of that exact inflation messaging in our texts, emails, and social media,” said Holman.

HOW TO TEXT

Texting used to just be for disasters with a [text-to-give strategy](#), but that's changed and expanded.

"We have a really comprehensive integrated marketing plan," Holman said. "We do just about any marketing, you could think of—email, social media, digital advertising." But it all has to work together.

Email donations actually surpass text donations for the Salvation Army Great Lakes Division, though there are several factors at play, including an audience that skews older and sending more emails than they do texts.

"I know that adding that text messaging helped to increase our online revenue," Holman said. "So anything we could do to help bring in more online donations was something we wanted to try."

Multi-touch marketing:

"It has to be part of the bigger integrated strategy," said Anna Davenport. "I think of retailers that I get texts from, if I see them on Instagram, and then I get a promotional email, and then I get a text, I'm much more likely to interact with them by that third touch point than if it just comes out of nowhere. So I think it's really important to use text in conjunction with all the other methods."

WHY TEXT?

"I feel like more people open their text messages than open every single email they get," Holman said. "That in itself tells a good story."

WHY RALLY?

Cost:

The Great Lakes Division was using another company before Rally. "But the costs started to go up more and more," said Holman. "We were going to be paying twice as much as we pay for Rally Corp now."

Integrations:

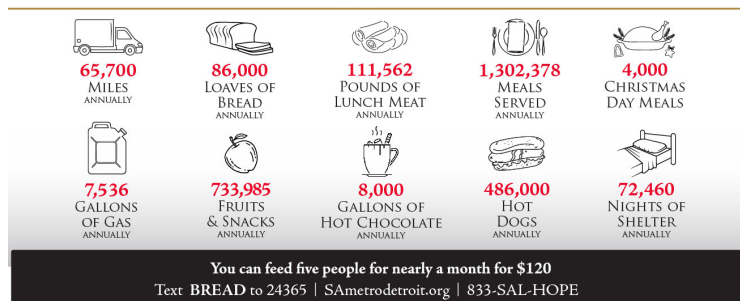
Another big factor was being able to [integrate](#) with the Salvation Army's online donation platform, Classy.

User-friendly:

"It just seemed really easy to use," Holman said. "It was very user-friendly and something someone new coming in could pick up rather quickly."



Each day our Bed & Bread Club® truck drivers make their way through Detroit, traveling multiple routes and making 60 stops to feed the hungry. That includes holidays and days when the weather may prove dangerous, because we understand that hunger doesn't take any days off. On days so cold and snowy that schools and businesses must close, and even the postal service can't deliver mail, our trucks deliver thousands of meals to people who otherwise would not eat at all.



USING KEYWORDS

The Salvation Army Great Lakes Division uses keywords for multiple fundraising efforts, where they ask people to text a keyword to 24365.

Use it everywhere:

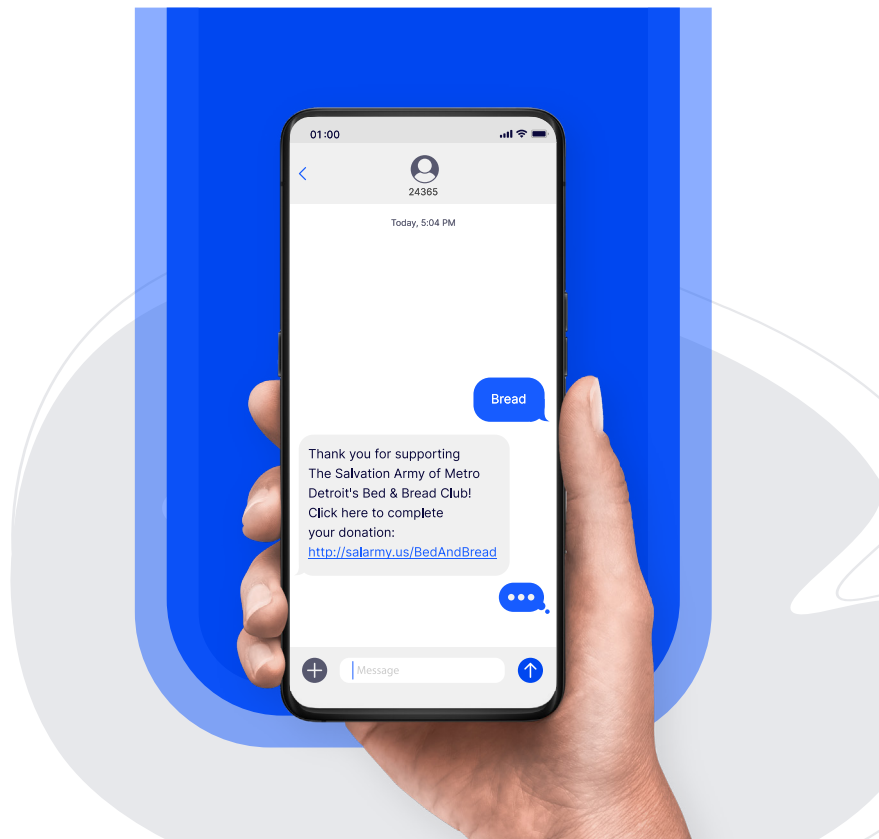
“We use it on our marketing materials, we use it on social media, web banners, we use it on our livestream for the radiothon and the slides for that,” said Holman. “It’s really easy to use it during interviews on TV and radio. Then we also use it on our advertising spots. So as many places as we can possibly use it.”

Multiple keywords:

They use a number of different keywords for different causes, including their most successful one, BREAD for their Bed and Bread Club, TORNADO and FLOOD for natural disaster fundraising, GRIFFINS for events with a local sports team, GIVE connects with signage at their location in Lansing, Michigan, and GIFT is another keyword with year-round use.

Avoid confusion:

They run a kids’ coat drive with the keywords COAT and COATS. “There’s been a little confusion with only having one of them and then somebody texted the other one,” Holman said. “So we just bought them both.”



Media friendly:

"I know the media really appreciates it because it's really easy to say during an interview," Holman said.

Celebrities:

"When we had keywords tied to celebrities for our Annual Celebrity Bell Ring Weekend, each celebrity promoted their keyword or link on their personal social media pages, on-air, and TV interviews and this helped to increase how much was donated," Holman said.



Success:

Between keywords and five outbound text messages during their radiothon they raised about \$12,000. "That's just for this one day event," said Holman. "I think that's pretty successful. And that's just the most recent event, we've raised more in prior years."

Replies:

"After a Thanksgiving basket text someone asked for assistance and we were able to refer them from there," said Davenport. "That's the most notable conversation I can remember."



CUSTOMER SERVICE

“There were a couple of times where our text messages didn’t deploy,” Holman said. “But we reached out to Rally Corp and they were very quick to find out why and fix the problem and make sure those messages did get deployed. Customer service has been great.”



See how Rally can work for you. Go to RallyCorp.com to get started.