

*This history was shared by long-time residents, Larry and Anne Smallwood.
Mr. Smallwood passed away April 1, 2019.*

How The Salvation Army Kettle was started in Bridgewater

By Larry Smallwood --November, 2017

The year was 1985 when I started ringing the bell for the Salvation Army. It was after the flood of 1985. Anne and I were ringing the bell at Roses Department Store on North Mason Street in Harrisonburg. A man from West Virginia came up to the kettle deposited his donation and said that he didn't have much to give but he would not pass the kettle by. I ask him why. He said that he would not forget what the Salvation Army did for him during the flood. Soon after that I talked to Bob Miller with the Salvation Army and Ralph Eagle with Bridgewater IGA about putting a kettle at the IGA in Bridgewater.

The following year at the Bridgewater IGA we had a stand and a chair. My church, Mt. Crawford United Methodist, rang the bell on Fridays and Saturdays. We did it that way for a couple of years. Then I started inviting other churches and clubs in Bridgewater to help. Mr. Roscoe Burgess with the North River Baptist Church would take Fridays and Saturdays after Thanksgiving. Other churches and clubs that began to volunteer were Bridgewater United Methodist, Bridgewater Brethren, Bridgewater Presbyterian, Bridgewater Baptist, Bridgewater Ruritans and the Masonic Eureka Lodge 195. So many people would call me wanting to volunteer and to bring their children and grandchildren so that they could learn the importance of helping those in need. My granddaughter, Ally Glick, would sit out in the cold with me and ring the bell. On Christmas Eve nights I loaded the stand, chair and kettle on my truck and transported it to the Salvation Army Headquarters in Harrisonburg.

In the beginning I would pick up the kettle on Friday mornings from the Salvation Army and return it each night or the Salvation would have a representative to bring and pick up the kettle at IGA. Later an agreement was reached with Ralph Eagle at IGA to secure the kettle in IGA vault and the Salvation Army representative would pick up kettle at the IGA. In other words, there was quite a bit of time involved.

It is so good to see that now, 2017, the Salvation Army Stand is heated, the bell is rung many more days, and so many people in our Community share the responsibility of helping our local Salvation Army.