



**Alaska Divisional Headquarters**  
***Community Relations and Development Department***  
***News Release***

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**Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Services Director Jenni Ragland Receives  
2014 National Spirit Award from National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster**



**Jenni Ragland with her VOAD Award**  
(Photo by Ken Cavallero)

Jenni Ragland, emergency disaster services director for The Salvation Army's Alaska Division, is the winner of the 2014 National VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) Award, presented annually to the individual involved in the VOAD movement who, in the past year, exhibited outstanding and unique service within the movement.

In May 2013, Ragland responded to a crisis in Galena, Alaska, when a flood along the Yukon River caused severe damage to 75 percent of the town. Ragland's action directly benefitted hundreds of survivors and dozens of mass care co-workers.

"Challenged by logistical and cultural details unknown in the lower 48 states, Jenni's efforts were a stellar success," said James McGowan, senior director strategic initiatives for National VOAD, "worthy of recognition by the National VOAD community."

Galena, located in central Alaska just south of the Arctic Circle, has a population of 470. The residents rely on subsistence hunting and fishing as their primary food source. All supplies and other food supplies must be flown or barged in via the Yukon River. The flooding impacted 90 percent of the homes, causing many residents to lose all, or most, of their stored subsistence resources. A federal disaster was declared and local, state, tribal, non-governmental and federal mass care partners collaborated to provide life-saving and life-sustaining services.

After the flood, mass care efforts had three phases. During the initial response, the state, The Salvation Army, the American Red Cross and the Tanana Chiefs Conference evacuated, sheltered and fed all disaster-impacted residents. The second phase began in early August, after the activation and arrival of the FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) Mass Care team. Multi-agency task forces developed plans for congregate sheltering, feeding, pets, and access and functional needs support. Teams included representatives from the state, The Salvation Army, Alaska SPCA, American Red Cross, AmeriCorps, Bureau of Land Management, FEMA Corps and FEMA. The third phase entailed the provision of Salvation Army prepared frozen meals for long-term shelter residents and tailored feeding plans for families with food needs who were sheltering in-place, all of which was Ragland's brainchild. She also coordinated and managed the effort.

"Jenni's leadership and positive influence was instrumental in the success of all three of these phases," McGowan said. "As a member of the mass care disaster assessment team in June and July, she deployed to Fairbanks, Galena and other villages...leveraging strong relationships previously developed with local, state, tribal and federal partners to determine the true extent of need and the best options available."

While The Salvation Army has a strong presence in Alaska, it has not been involved in disaster response since the 1964 Great Earthquake, a fact that did not faze Ragland.

"The Salvation Army's relationship to Alaska response may be forever changed as a result of the extraordinary work Jenni accomplished fostering partnerships, building community, and finding creative ways to get the job done regardless of the circumstances," McGowan said.

"She jumped in with both feet and did not take a break until November, sitting side by side with state and FEMA staff at the joint field office, and traveling to Galena every two weeks to provide direct service to survivors and respite for her Salvation Army compatriots on the ground."

Ragland's plan to provide culturally appropriate frozen meal entrees for residents also included ongoing access to Salvation Army referral resources for those needing support. In addition, when the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—Administration for Children and Families representative returned from meetings with specific items needed, Ragland always offered to help obtain them. In most cases, she secured the requested items.



**Ragland in Salvation Army Canteen  
Galena August 2013**

Her efforts within the Galena community uplifted people's spirits. McGowan noted that she also improved the morale of the team with her "positive and persevering spirit, abundant warmth, and tasty baked treats...this well-honed attention to details and profound ability to know exactly when to say or do just the right thing makes Jenni the most rare of gems, and the person you most want by your side as a working partner or as a friend."

Major George Baker, Divisional Commander, said the following, "Jenni Ragland exemplifies the service ethic of The Salvation Army in so many ways. Her work on the Galena disaster response is just one more of the ways that Jenni works to serve those who need it most. This award could not come to a more committed servant."

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