

Block Link Report

March 8, 2021

This is the second in a series of reports about the resources available to residents of Benton Park West (as well as the public at large) This time I'll talk about The Salvation Army (TSA in this report), Temple Corps, housed on Arsenal at California.

I spoke with Grant Holloway for this information. We started by talking about a collaboration between TSA and BPW to produce neighborhood drive in movie nights in the summer of 2021. TSA had just received a grant to purchase an inflatable movie screen and a projector for this very purpose. We agreed that BPW will man the popcorn, snow cone and/or cotton candy machine, as well as do traffic control. Grant will make a flyer and we will share responsibility for publicity. TSA has good speakers for outdoor use, but Grant will investigate possibly using a radio frequency for car radios. We may decide to use chairs rather than cars later in the summer if Covid becomes more controlled. At the neighborhood meeting in February we got many movie suggestions, including several Disney classics, animal stories, sport stories and even the suggestion of a sing along.

The Salvation Army goes far beyond that, however. While their religious services continue to be virtual at this time they have not stopped the essential services for their clients.

-Every week they serve about 230 families at their food bank, where people get to choose the foods that work best for their families. They also give away prepackaged boxes of fresh, dried, and canned foods once a month to anyone who drives up, no questions asked. When they are able, they also give away diapers, cleaning and hygiene supplies.

-They help with rent and utility assistance.

-2 different pregnancy support groups, one of which focuses on the needs of teen moms, rent office space from them.

-Young Life serves the needs of unchurched youth in the area with a weekly youth group and meals.

- City Mission Collective offers a community meal and classes.
- TSA serves community meals to anyone who comes on Wednesday and Friday evenings. These average about 120 people for each meal.
- They have a program called Pathway To Hope which helps people identify obstacles to getting out of poverty. This is a long-term program where a social worker helps people get child care, jobs and generally build a community of support around a family.
- Lastly, they have locker rooms, showers, hygiene kits and serve as a daytime warming center for unhoused individuals.

Overall, their building is very well used and their services are available to all of the people of South St Louis. We are lucky to have such a resource in BPW. When asked what we, as a neighborhood, can do for them, Grant suggested that they can always use more canned goods and dried foods like pastas or cereal. Once we are meeting in person again, we might want to consider a monthly food drive. Until then they will welcome anyone who would like to drop off a bag of these foods at their building during weekday hours.