

# Get Out and Lend a Hand!

Dr. Paul Rader, former Salvation Army CEO, talks about the importance of community service

Interview by Anna Campbell

## How did you serve the community during your college years and what valuable lessons about service and leadership did you learn while attending school?

When I was in college, service was not as high a priority as it is now, particularly service in the community. But that is very characteristic of this generation of students. What we are calling the Millennial Generation is very service-oriented, and probably 60-70 percent of students these days are wanting to be involved in some form of service to the community.

Partly as a result of having been [at Asbury College], my wife and I went out to serve as missionaries in the country of Korea. We served there for 22 years and were engaged in a whole range of service programs. We were directly involved in the training of Koreans for service as Salvation Army officers when we first went. Korea was going through a very difficult period after a devastating war. There were people living in caves and sewer culverts, shacks, and holes in the ground. We used to go out in the evening and feed them hot soup and rice; very often it was the only hot meal of the day they had. There weren't as many direct opportunities for doing things in our own community as there are now, but there are certain values that were implicated that helped us see the importance of service.

## Why do you think young adults can have a greater impact in doing service?

I think it sets a pattern of community responsibility and involvement that will result in a lifetime of service. If they have an opportunity to build houses with Habitat for Humanity over spring break or the Christmas holiday, that's going to be an experience they'll never forget. If they go on a service trip to Latin

America, or to Kenya in Africa, and they're engaged in doing some kind of practical service and have the satisfaction of knowing they've made a difference in the lives of the people they've served, that's going to be an exciting possibility for them for the rest of their lives. So it's not only the impact they have right now, but in the future as well.

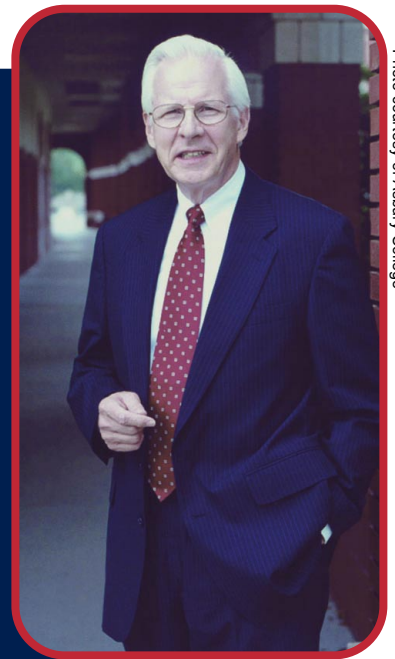
## Many students may think attending college is unnecessary; that they will learn all they need to know through life experience, and by not attending college they may even have more time for service to their community.

You know, it's always good to take time to sharpen your axe. If you're going to chop wood, you can say, "I don't have time to sharpen my axe, I have to get busy chopping the wood." But if the axe is not sharp you're going to use a lot more energy, and you're probably going to displace some of that energy. If you get the necessary skills and the necessary understanding, you sharpen your ability to respond to the challenges in our society, and you're going to [be able to] accomplish a great deal more. It may take a few years of investment in order to equip yourself to do that, but if you fail to do that, you're very disadvantaged. That's not to say that there haven't been people who didn't get to go to school who haven't done some wonderful things in their community, because there are. However, in our society today, it's pretty much expected that people who are going to make a significant contribution to their community will have invested some years in undergraduate education to equip them to do that effectively.

## In the wake of September 11, our country has been alerted to the importance of service. Why do you think a post-secondary education

## is helpful in preparing students for this type of service?

That tragic experience in our country has bonded us in a way that would not otherwise have been possible. In many ways it was an attack upon our country that made us come together as a nation, as a people. [It] gave us a new sense of community and common interest in not only protecting ourselves, but in rebuilding and bringing healing and hope to people who were affected by that tragedy. And in a setting like this, we're thinking about what makes America the country that it is; we're thinking about our historical heritage, we're thinking about our values and ideals, the philosophy that has



Dr. Paul A. Rader is president of Asbury College and served as the international leader and general of The Salvation Army from 1994-99.

undergirded our American way of life. We recognize that in a democratic society we have not only wonderful freedoms, but we have significant responsibilities to protect those freedoms and to recognize that we have a common destiny and we need to work together to support one another in community. That's a very vital aspect of what it means to be an American, let alone a member of the international community. 🙏

Photo courtesy of Asbury College