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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **MEDIA ALERT –The Salvation Army’s B.L.E.S.S. Tips Provide Emotional and Spiritual Support**

**Houston, TX – (September 25, 2008)** – After a storm comes a calm, the saying goes, but sometimes that is not the case for many people who have survived a difficult situation – especially when you are talking about a natural disaster like Hurricane IKE. For residents of Galveston Island and the rest of the Gulf Coast The Salvation Army continues providing Emotional and Spiritual Support as part of their overall disaster relief efforts.

“Beyond meeting the immediate needs of those who have been affected by this hurricane, we want to also make sure that people know they can count on The Salvation Army for moral support,” says Major Marshall Gesner, area commander for The Salvation Army of Greater Houston. “We’ve had emotional and spiritual care specialists on the field since we first arrived after Hurricane IKE and will continue to offer this service to the public until the need for it has been exhausted.”

Roving emotional and spiritual care specialists offer Gulf Coast residents the following five tips on how to cope in the aftermath of Hurricane IKE:

Acronym for short - **B.L.E.S.S.**

**Be Proactive** - If you feel you need to talk or would like to share your thoughts or experiences with others, take action. Make phone calls, seek information, and occupy your time with chores and/or any other positive actions that will take away from constant nervousness and/or stress. If you feel you need professional help, seek it. Even if you are unsure of exactly what course of action you would like or need to take, approach a loved one or a trained professional about your concerns.

**Listen to the Experience of Others** - Sometimes just knowing that someone has been through a similar or more difficult situation than the one you are experiencing is a relief and may provide you some insight on how to cope with your own feelings.

**Establish a Routine** - Having a routine occupies the mind and allows you to deal with your emotions more strategically. Rather than simply stressing out about a situation, you want to create a plan for your day. This minimizes idle time for negative thoughts or feelings.

**Share Your Experience With Others** - This will help you explore your true emotions and needs and will allow others to feel more comfortable sharing their own experiences and concerns with you. Again, if you feel you need professional help, seek it. Even if you are unsure of exactly what course of action you would like or need to take, approach a loved one or a trained professional about your concerns.

**Stay Connected With Your Faith Community** - Exploring and strengthening your spiritual beliefs can provide you with strength, as well as strengthen your faith. In difficult times it is especially important for many people to feel a deeper connection to a community or an extended family and friendship network. Faith communities provide this type of support.

The Salvation Army has served in excess of 1.8 million meals as a result of Hurricane IKE, and continues operating a fleet of more than 100 mobile feeding units across the Southeast Texas region. In Galveston, The Salvation Army is also providing cleaning kits to returning islanders.

Individuals and corporations interested in making monetary donations to The Salvation Army may do so by calling 1-800-SAL-ARMY (725-2769) or by accessing [www.SalvationArmyHouston.org](http://www.SalvationArmyHouston.org).

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*In this community since 1889, The Salvation Army Greater Houston Area Command serves Harris, Montgomery and Fort Bend Counties through youth programs, shelter, disaster relief, counseling, senior programs and rehabilitation. The mission of The Salvation Army Greater Houston Area Command is to meet human needs without discrimination. Each year over 33 million Americans receive assistance from The Salvation Army. About 89.5 cents of every dollar raised locally is used to support those services in Houston and at close to 9,000 communities nationwide. For more information about The Salvation Army, please visit [www.SalvationArmyHouston.org](http://www.SalvationArmyHouston.org).*