

Oh, You Beautiful Dolls!

Written by: **Sara Mullins**

Photography by: **Lance C. Bell**

When many people think of the Salvation Army, they often conjure up the familiar sight of people in Santa suits, ringing bells and proclaiming “Merry Christmas!” over black kettles to inspire holiday donations from shoppers for those less fortunate.

However, the ladies of Cumberland’s Salvation Army Women’s Auxiliary have developed a unique way to raise money so successful that it’s become the group’s sole annual fund raiser. This past April, more than 300 people attended “Dolls Now and Forever,” the Auxiliary’s 20th Annual Doll Show and Auction — including the mayor and city council of Cumberland. The event was the most profitable to date, yielding more than \$4,300 in donations that allowed the purchase of a much needed copy machine plus support for Youth Council summer camps, toy drives and food collections.

For a modest \$6, attendees enjoyed a luncheon of various salads, pasta with peaches, breads and home-baked cakes and pies, plus a bonus gift bag. Many come to show support for the Salvation Army’s activities. Members of Frostburg State University’s AmeriCorps A-STAR! Program helped with meal service.

But the real stars of the show were 43 dolls with names like Hamia, Selena the Indian Maiden, Grandma &



Grandpa, Hakana and Snow Baby. The description of Claire of the Goldenvale Collection is typical: “An elf from magical forests, she perches on her mystical swing. Look at her ensemble of twinkling jeweled braid and glistening gold lace. With posies and petals she is unforgettable and

will surely cast a spell of laughter and fun.” Categories for judging included “Best of Show,” “Most Beautiful Doll,” “Best Historical/Character Doll,” among a total of 15.

At auction, each doll brought anywhere from \$25 to \$100. Some were donated by the Maryland Mountain Doll Club, Hobby House Press and individuals, while others were purchased at a special outlet in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Other attractions included a Country Store, Sweet Shoppe, Bear Table and Previously Loved Dolls. Attendees could also purchase other dolls and floral arrangements. The Notables provided entertainment, local businesses donated a wide range of goods and services and Pennsylvania auctioneers Jack and Daryl Weaver volunteered their talents.

But none of it would happen without the 55 members of the Auxiliary, a group whose energy belies their average age of 70 – and, of course, those beautiful dolls.

