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Liberal High School graduate Beatriz Rojo, left, watches as a young lady puts money in the kettle for the 2011 Salvation Army Christmas drive. This year's campaign kicked off on Nov. 16 and will run through Christmas Eve. L&T file photo/Robert Pierce

By ROBERT PIERCE

• Leader & Times

It's December, and the sights and sounds of Christmas are in the air everywhere.

Those sounds include bells ringing in front of some stores, as the Salvation Army is once again

out collecting money during its annual Christmas campaign.

In many countries, the Salvation Army is most recognized during the Christmas season with its volunteers and employees who stand outside of businesses and play or sing Christmas carols, or ring bells to inspire passersby to place donations of cash and checks inside red kettles.

A tradition has developed in the United States in which, in some places, gold coins or rings are anonymously inserted into the kettles. This was first recorded in 1982, in Crystal Lake, Ill., a suburb of Chicago.

Stephen Burkee, field consultant for the Salvation Army's Western Kansas division, said this year's drive kicked off on Nov. 16, and bells will be ringing right up through Christmas Eve.

The winter weather currently passing through Southwest Kansas could put a temporary hold on things, but when they are working, volunteers will be taking donations at Walmart and Dillon's in Liberal. The local Walgreens store, he said, is expected to be added to the list of locations where volunteers will work.

Donation buckets will be in place from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

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