

On the Scene

SUMMER 2006 NEWS AND STORIES FROM THE SALVATION ARMY AUSTRALIA EASTERN TERRITORY

A bright new start for Toby

Lana Luxford, co-manager of The Salvation Army's Toowoomba Crisis and Support Service, blinked back tears as she talked to the beautiful boy with the beaming smile, standing in front of her at the service's annual Christmas party.

As his words excitedly tumbled out, telling her about his new Christian school and the excellent grades he was getting, her mind went back to the filthy, angry young boy, with the matted hair, standing outside in the rain and crying as if his heart was going to break...

Lana remembered the torment she sensed within this beautiful boy, who was only six years old when she first met him. On that day, Toby's* eyes had brimmed over with tears. His family was homeless and his mum was "off her face" on speed again. There was no food, no money, and three younger sisters who were crying with hunger and fear.

Toby was already trying to take on responsibility as "head" of his family. He would grab a few dollars off mum, before she blew it all on drugs, to try to keep them all fed.

Lana says: "When we first met Toby's mum she had been in and out of prison.



LANA LUXFORD PICTURED WITH TOBY*.

She was a really heavy drug user.

"Toby was very young and I remember one day that he was already so hurt by the world that he picked up a fence paling and whacked his mother across the face with it.

"On another occasion, his mother came down to our office and Toby was angry about something.

"It was pouring with rain. He ran outside and I wanted to follow him, but I knew he would become more enraged. He stood in the rain crying and kicking the downpipe over and over.

"The family entered our crisis accommodation and Toby went off to our Red Shield Summer Camp. At camp he was a delight. We really saw what a precious little boy he was.

"The family came in and out of our accommodation and care and, at some stage, the mum ended up back in prison. When she came home, she started sorting herself out. She actually said

that while she was in prison she thought a lot about the help we'd given her and she realised she was a person of value and that people really did care about her.

"She now has a terrific job. She works lots of hours and often brings donations of food from work to our service to help others.

"It was such a thrill to see Toby and his sisters again at our last Christmas party.

"These children who used to always be so raggedy came to the Christmas party spotlessly clean and dressed beautifully," says Lana.

"Once upon a time, Toby would bail his sisters up in the corner of the room and belt them. After the Christmas party though, when Toby got into the car, he reached over and gently helped his little sisters to put their seat belts on. There was no roughness, just care.

"He was a totally different child and it absolutely reduced me to tears." ○

* NAME CHANGED

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STREETNET VAN

The success of a mobile Internet van in connecting homeless and disadvantaged people with family and friends has surprised even those who established the service. See page 3.

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Christmas online

Visit The Salvation Army Christmas website – salvos.org.au/christmas – for information about community Christmas day lunches, Salvation Army carol singing events, Christmas church meeting times, tips for avoiding stress at Christmas, and ideas about how to support The Salvation Army at Christmas. You can give to The Salvation Army Christmas Appeal online or by calling **13 SALVOS (13 72 58)**.

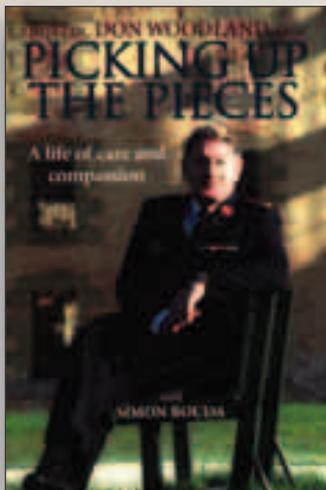


Picking up the pieces

In the aftermath of the Port Arthur massacre, the Thredbo landslide, the Newcastle earthquake, and many other tragedies affecting Australians, Salvation Army Lieut-Colonel Don Woodland was there to offer support.

His memoirs, written with Channel Nine's Simon Bouda, are full of compassion and the deep wisdom gleaned from a lifetime of helping people survive the worst that life can throw at them.

Copies of *Picking up the Pieces* are available from Salvationist Supplies. Call **(02) 9266 9513** or visit www.salvosupplieasyd.com



New Salvo plane boosts services to the bush

The Salvation Army took delivery during mid-October of a new plane to assist with rural chaplaincy in outback Queensland. With the drought continuing in many parts of Queensland and regional Australia, the plane is a timely arrival for the Army's Outback Flying Service.

The Outback Flying Service provides much needed ministry and assistance to people living on remote properties in central and north Queensland. Flying Padres, Captains Col and Bev Kingston, see the devastating effects of the drought as they

travel across the two-million square kilometre area they support. "We see empty paddocks, barren land with no cattle and farmers that had to get rid of stock. It's costing our farmers dearly," says Col Kingston.

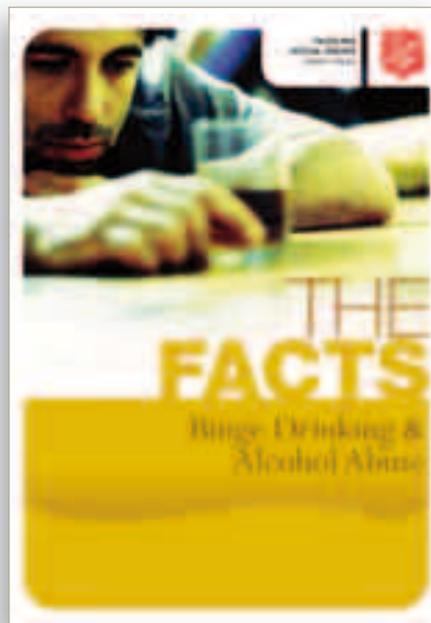
A generous bequest to The Salvation Army has made possible the purchase of the new aircraft. It will replace the existing Cessna 182Q.

A history of the Outback Flying Service is available on our website at salvos.org.au. To contact the Flying Padres, call **0421 360 133**.



ABOVE: CAPTAINS COL AND BEV KINGSTON RECEIVE KEYS TO THE NEW AEROPLANE (PICTURED REAR).

Targeting binge drinking



In response to increasing concern regarding the incidence of binge drinking in our community, in particular amongst young people, The Salvation Army has released a new booklet giving vital facts regarding the dangers of binge drinking and alcohol abuse.

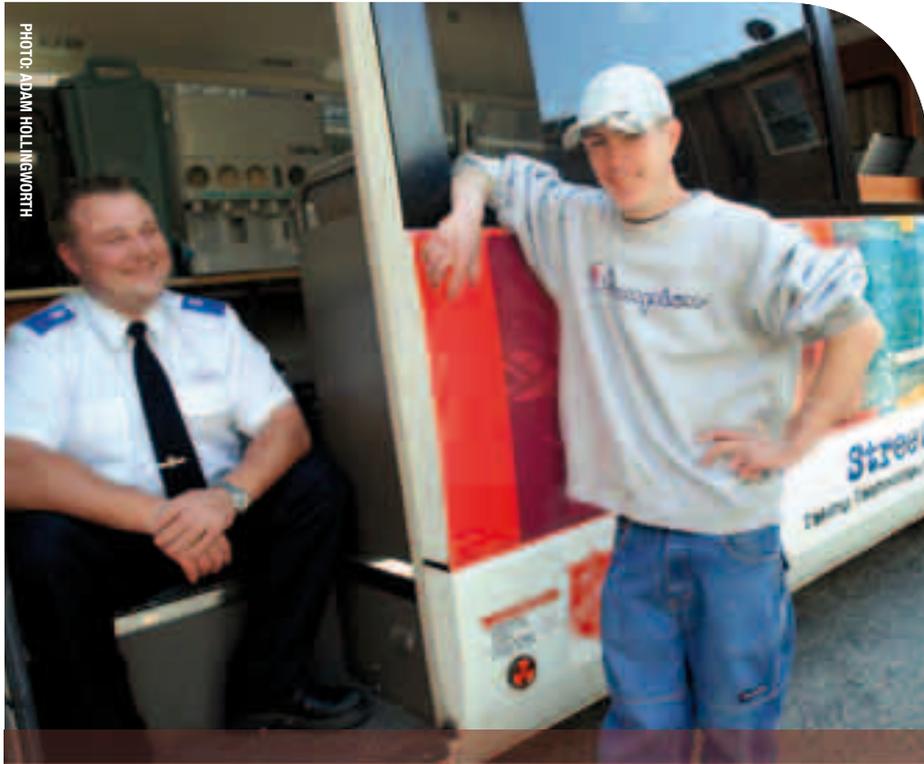
The booklet gives important information for parents, young people and the general community.

It covers issues from health and wellbeing to work and relationships, and aims to give no-nonsense facts about alcohol abuse, information that may come as a surprise to many people.

To obtain your free copy, go to salvos.org.au/alcohol or phone **(02) 9266 9820** in NSW or **(07) 3222 6666** in Qld.

Technology links homeless to loved ones at Christmas

Many families say the pain of not knowing what has happened to a runaway child is almost unbearable. Wondering if their loved one is dead or alive, looking for their face in every crowd, can be a daily torment. At Christmas time, the rawness of that pain is often the greatest.



ABOVE: REG HIERZER CHATS WITH A CLIENT OF THE STREETNET BUS; THE BUS IS HELPING TO BRING TECHNOLOGY TO THE STREETS (INSET BELOW).

The Salvation Army's StreetNet bus, which was launched in 2004, is proving to be a surprisingly effective tool in reconnecting homeless youth with their families and friends.

The bus provides access to email, Centrelink and other online services for homeless and disadvantaged young people through the use of five laptop computers and a wireless broadband connection. It's active most nights of the week, frequenting hotspots in Kings Cross, Parramatta and Wyong (on the Central Coast) among others.

The success of the service in enabling homeless young people to connect with loved ones has surprised even those who first dreamed up the concept. Salvation Army Oasis Youth Support Chaplain Reg Hierzer, who drives the StreetNet bus, says: "The technology in the bus is used for all sorts of purposes. We're discovering that many

people use it to email their friends and family just to let them know they're safe and well. They don't always say where they are, but they do say they are alive and doing ok. Encouragingly, we have had a number of young people actually return home to their families.

"Technology is only one thing we offer. I'd call the bus '1001 resources' – it serves many, many roles. There are vastly different needs every night – they might include finding someone a bed, feeding someone, offering first aid, or giving referrals to other services.

"As Christmas approaches, thoughts of family become more significant to homeless people and the StreetNet bus provides a way of responding to these thoughts. For families and friends, a message from a loved one is the greatest gift they can receive."

For more information about the StreetNet bus, phone (02) 9331 2266.

Alec's story

Alec* had grown up in a normal suburban home in Brisbane* with a loving mother and father. As he entered his teenage years he became increasingly angry and, one night, after a particularly bitter fight with his parents, Alec stormed out the front door and simply never returned.

Four years later, while living on the streets of Sydney, Alec met The Salvation Army's StreetNet chaplain Reg Hierzer.

"Alec was homeless at the time we met him," Reg explains. "He had been living at backpacker hostels or squatting. We started chatting, and he told me he had an old email address for his parents but hadn't had any contact with them since he left home."

Reg explained to Alec that the bus could help him get in touch with his family and suggested he send them a quick email. "I showed Alec how to set up an email account and he sent a short message to his parents in Brisbane. I then saw him again two nights later. He came back on the bus again, had a cup of coffee, another chat, and I showed him how to bring up his email. It was just great – he had an email back from his mum."

"I got a phone call from him about three weeks later. He had moved back to Brisbane, back to his parents and everything was going fine. He had also enrolled at TAFE. I actually spoke to his mum on the phone and she thanked us so deeply for our work and said that if it wasn't for us she may never have found him again," says Reg.

* THIS IS A TRUE STORY BUT NAME AND LOCATION HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO PROTECT IDENTITIES.



Starting to heal the horrors of the past

From fear, to a love of education after 50

"I can still remember my first day at school. I was left-handed and in those days you weren't allowed to write with your left hand. They used to bash you over the knuckles and tie your hand up behind your back. They did dreadful things. Then when I went to boarding school, the sexual abuse started. That lasted from when I was about eight until I was about 12. I hated school." – Graeme.

It is hard to believe that the enthusiastic TAFE student in his 50s, studying computers and adult literacy, left school after year eight with almost no literacy skills and a loathing for the education system.

Employed for much of his adult life as a truck driver, Graeme has waged a lifelong battle with mental health issues and anxieties related to his abuse as a child. He has been homeless a number of times and never would have imagined that one day he would go back to "school".

While staying at The Salvation Army Pindari crisis accommodation centre in Brisbane, Graeme met Kerin Bushell, who teaches adult language and basic computer classes to Pindari clients, as well as teaching at the local Ithaca TAFE.

Graeme explains: "Darren (Pindari Program Coordinator) introduced us and said Kerin was a school teacher. I went to the computer classes at Pindari because I always wanted to learn how to work computers."

Now living independently, Graeme has started attending TAFE: "I started literacy class this year with Kerin as my teacher. She's such a great teacher. I never knew teachers could be like her.

"I'm enjoying learning very much and Kerin is going to teach me more about computers. I'm hoping to buy myself a reconditioned computer. I want to continue the reading program and do



ABOVE: GRAEME (PICTURED HERE) NOW HAS A LOVE OF EDUCATION.

more computer classes. I'll be going back next year and the year after – however long it takes. TAFE has helped me relate to people a lot more and to see things are achievable."

Graeme says: "I never knew people cared before I went to Pindari. They were really nice to me at The Salvation Army. They helped me get to where I am at the moment and they offer that for everybody. Maybe not everybody will take their advice or want their help, but I did and I have changed my life around. I hope it's going to stay that way."

The Pindari service, which generally accommodates around 100 men at any one time for up to three months, has just been granted \$150,000 from the Queensland Government to join with a number of other services to expand the adult language program into a number of community venues.

Program Coordinator Darren McGee says: "Many of our clients come to us with huge issues. Around 60-80 % of the

people we're dealing with struggle with mental health problems. There are also men with drug psychosis and other issues related to drug use.

"What we try to do is give them encouragement and hope. We try to nurture their souls and help them find and build upon positive strengths in their lives. The adult language classes play a large role in that."

Pindari also offers a range of additional services to clients such as a legal clinic and regular visits from Centrelink, the area mental health team, and a drug and alcohol psychiatrist.

Darren says: "It's just wonderful to see men like Graeme – who came to us with a defeated spirit – find enthusiasm and joy. Graeme had so many blows in his life. The language program has built his confidence. He started to believe in himself again. He is a wonderful man and it is just brilliant to see him go from such a negative feeling about education to such a positive outlook." *o*

If you would like further information, please tick the relevant boxes and return by mail to: **The Salvation Army, GPO Box 9888, Your Capital City.**

Or fax to: **02 9266 9805.**

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Letters & feedback welcome!