

# On the Scene

WINTER 2009 NEWS AND STORIES FROM THE SALVATION ARMY AUSTRALIA EASTERN TERRITORY

## Essential boundaries save families

“By the time Sean\* was 15, he’d been expelled from three different schools and I was heading for a breakdown. My home was like a war zone ... I would come home from work or study and sit in my driveway in my car, sometimes half an hour, psyching myself up to go into the house ...

“The support of The Salvation Army First Floor Restoration Program and the things I have learned ... have given me back my family. We communicate more effectively with each other and I have been able to create a safe, healthy, functioning environment ...”

KATRINA\*

Five years ago, Katrina\* quietly packed her drug and alcohol-addicted son’s bags and took them out to the front of the house. In a calm voice, but with hands shaking and feeling as if her heart was breaking, she then ordered him out of the house and into the car. She told him firmly how much she loved him, but that until he sought help for his addiction, she would be taking him to a youth service shelter and that his behaviour could no longer be tolerated in the family home.

Sean’s addiction, crime and anger were so spiralling out of control that Katrina’s other three children were slowly being destroyed – terrorised and



SHARON PATTERSON

LEFT: JAYNE WILSON OFFERS A WORD OF COMFORT TO KATRINA\*.

but he just doesn’t see it himself.”

Today, Katrina works for The Salvation Army First Floor Restoration Program (FFRP) at Wollongong to help others battling addiction, as well as families who have an addicted child. Her journey with Sean is far from over and he has recently relapsed after an extended period drug and alcohol free.

The support from staff and other families at the FFRP, Katrina says, “saved her family” and equipped her emotionally with the tools she needs to deal with the son she loves so dearly.

Katrina says: “Before, I felt no hope, couldn’t see a way through it – now I know there is light at the end of the tunnel. My other

children are so much stronger, and I believe Sean will come through.

“We are in a war for our children against drugs and alcohol, and it is heartbreaking – but I believe we can win that war, if we work together as a community, family by family.”

Manager of The Salvation Army FFRP, Jayne Wilson says that the program started 12 years ago with the understanding that one person in addiction can directly adversely affect another 46 people around them – so supporting, equipping and training families of those in addiction, as well as the wider community, was essential.

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traumatised by her middle son’s increasingly erratic behaviour.

Katrina says: “In the end, we decided as a family and with the support of **The Salvation Army** support group that our lives would go forward regardless of whether Sean’s did. We wanted him to be happy, we wanted him to be a part of our lives, but we didn’t want the addiction ... and as long as he continued to choose that over us, he couldn’t be a part of the other children’s environment.

“You feel guilt, great guilt,” Katrina says. “I worry enormously about him and the community at large. I also feel grief – he is my child and I can see such potential there,

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**RED SHIELD APPEAL**

## Call for support as demands rise

The Salvation Army needs to reach a national Red Shield Appeal total of \$73 million in 2009.

Appeals Director, Major Gary Masters says: "With the downturn in the economy and natural disasters placing even greater demand on Salvation Army services, more than ever we need community support. We need to reach our appeal goals if we are to maintain our vital programs in the year ahead."

The Red Shield Appeal concludes on 30 June, with the Doorknock on the weekend of 23-24 May. To make a credit card donation or to volunteer as a collector, please call **13 SALVOS (13 72 58)** or visit [salvos.org.au](http://salvos.org.au)



## Salvos at war

Do you have any stories to share about The Salvation Army in the two world wars?

We are researching a documentary about The Salvation Army's service to Australians in war time and would love to hear from you. Please call Anna Rudd on **0419 789 420** or email [anna.rudd@ae.salvationarmy.org](mailto:anna.rudd@ae.salvationarmy.org)

## Aged care complex opens

The Salvation Army has opened a new \$12.8 million high-care facility for the frail elderly at the Riverview Gardens Aged Care Centre (in Riverview, near Brisbane, Queensland). The complex incorporates two wings totalling 40 new high care places, each with ensuite, and a third wing containing 10 refurbished high-care places.

# Job seekers aim for the sky



The Salvation Army Employment Plus (TSAEP), Australia's largest national Job Network provider, recently brought Indigenous job seekers together with a range of organisations to discuss employment and training opportunities and to offer a number of immediate job applications. The organisations included Cooperative Change, Qantas, Jetstar, Broadlex and Spotless (which have airport catering, cleaning and security contracts).

The Brisbane, Perth and Sydney seminar days were designed as part of a major TSAEP push to develop training and seek out employment opportunities in and for new markets – in this instance to help to markedly increase the number of Indigenous Australians working in the airline industry.

TSAEP's Kirrilee Trist says: "Indigenous Australians represent a great pool of talent, but willing workers are often held back by hurdles such as lack of access to transport, education or information. If they come from a remote community, those problems

are often magnified. In addition, many job seekers see the airline industry as somewhat unattainable."

Job options explored included flight staff, cabin crew, administrators, baggage handlers, trade apprentices, trainees, drivers, call centre staff, baristas, security guards, telephone sales consultants and retail staff.

Kirrilee says: "We have already seen a number of successful placements, including two applicants who have reached the second stage in the cabin crew selection process."

As numbers of job seekers approaching TSAEP steadily increase by around one per cent per week nationally, TSAEP is continuing to seek out and develop new training programs. Kirrilee says: "We are working closely with industry and governments to pinpoint areas still experiencing skills shortages, then creating training and information programs around those needs." ○

**FROM PAGE 1** She says: "We have seen enormous success in the lives of the 100 or so families we have worked with to date, including the fact that none of the participants have gone through separation or marriage breakdown while part of the group." Jayne says: "We also look to build dialogue with professionals to support the families."

Wollongong University's Illawarra Institute for Mental Health recently formed a partnership with The Salvation Army

FFRP to undertake a three-year study to define, enhance and expand the FFRP's unique and highly successful 'village' model of peer-led, family-to-family support and care. It is hoped the program will then be taken up by Salvation Army recovery centres and others nationally.

Says Dr Trevor Crowe who heads the Institute: "We know it works. We want to capture it, articulate it and build the evidence to support it." ○

\*NAMES CHANGED TO PROTECT IDENTITIES

# Friendship and compassion in darkest times

“Ron’s friendship has made me feel like I want to live.

“You feel like he is a part of your close family and I have been through some rough times, once in particular that it [the thought of taking my life] was very close ... and it was very good for us that Ron was around!” JOHN\*

At several crucial points in his life – as a young soldier in Vietnam, after his home was destroyed by floods, and many years later facing suicidal thoughts and emotional trauma – John has been supported in some way by **The Salvation Army**.

It took a great deal of courage recently for John, a retired ambulance officer, to talk to On the Scene about some of the struggles he has faced. However, he is hoping to encourage others to recognise the work carried out by Salvation Army chaplains, and especially by his mate, Roma-based Salvation Army Rural Chaplain for Southern Queensland, Major Ron McMellon.

John had always planned to follow in his father’s footsteps as a professional soldier in the Medical Corps, so as soon as he finished high school, he joined up. John was initially posted to Papua New Guinea, and then to South Vietnam during the Vietnam conflict.

John explains: “I saw things I was not ready for as a young person – I don’t think any person would have been ready for what a lot of us saw over there. When your mates get killed it is very hard.

“The trauma I saw in Vietnam as a medic was probably worse than I saw in my whole life (20 years) subsequently as an ambulance officer. Of course there were certain moments in the ambos that were terrible too, such as when you have cot deaths or see kids (especially when you have kids of your own) torn apart in motor vehicle accidents.

“But it was the experience in Vietnam that had a profound and long-lasting effect – which I really wasn’t fully aware of until a few years ago,” he says.

After Vietnam, John started a family, completed a teaching degree, later remarried, established a successful small farm, and spent 20 years in the ambulance service – before suffering a major



**ABOVE & INSET:**  
SALVATION ARMY  
RURAL CHAPLAIN  
MAJOR RON  
MCMELLON IS A  
FRIEND TO MANY  
PEOPLE IN RURAL  
AREAS OF SOUTHERN  
QUEENSLAND.



emotional breakdown more recently.

Following the breakdown, John received a phone call out of the blue from a fellow hobbyist named Ron McMellon, who had heard about him on the grapevine. However, until Ron came to the door, John didn’t realise Ron was a Salvation Army officer.

John says: “When Ron first came to visit us, I got a bit of a shock. For one, he’s a huge man and, for two, he’s in a Salvation Army uniform. I thought, ‘What have I gotten myself into?’ But we started talking and he was just like a long-lost friend. We found we had lots more in common than just our hobby – Ron had a military background, he was in the SES (State Emergency Services) as is my wife. We all got on really well together.

“I’d had a lot to do with The Salvation Army in Vietnam, where every time you came back from a mission, they were always there. Then I lost my house in 1974 in floods and The Salvation Army was marvellous to me then,” John says.

John admits that today he is a “bit of a recluse with six foot fences all around the place”.

“I have a disease that they haven’t got a cure for,” he says, “and it is a huge burden on my wife and that really hurts.

“That’s where you need people for support and that’s where Ron has been a true friend to us. He’s very dedicated and has helped so much. I’ve rung him up at ten-thirty, eleven o’clock at night ... He’s been a real tower of strength.”

John believes the role of rural chaplains is vital – “Now that I know about the rural chaplains, I think they are just marvellous.” He has travelled with Ron to visit farmers on remote properties and has seen the absolute delight and genuine warmth given and received by Ron.

John says: “Ron’s friendship is an honest friendship. You know he’s doing the work he does because he genuinely cares for people, not because it’s just a job. He is just like a breath of fresh air when he comes to visit ...”

\*NAME CHANGED TO PROTECT IDENTITY

# 'Displaced workers' battle economic woes

"Our traditional client base is still seeking help, but there's definitely a new group of clients emerging alongside them – 'the displaced workers', for want of a better term. They're the people who have recently lost their jobs or significant hours of casual work, or they are small business and trades people whose sales or clientele have radically dropped off.

"The impact on them has been financial, emotional, and social. They have never needed to ask anyone for help before and they are really struggling. These are completely uncharted waters for them."

MAJOR MARINA RANDALL, SALVATION ARMY COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES CONSULTANT

They are an average suburban couple with three children who have always managed on their income. Peter\*, however, recently lost his job as a Queensland-based marketing consultant. Because the firm was liquidated there was no redundancy pay. He is still desperately trying to find a new job, but so far has had no luck. His wife cares for her ageing parents. For a variety of reasons Peter has not immediately been able to get Newstart benefits or a health care card, so the family is living with a dramatic loss of income, but almost no reduction in their major costs including housing.

Sadly, their story is typical of a new group of clientele starting to present in increasing numbers to **Salvation Army** welfare centres.

Salvation Army Community Support Services Consultant, Major Marina Randall says: "Through our welfare centres we offer emergency help in areas such as food, fuel, electricity costs and other needs, plus we often refer people to financial counselling and other services.

"Within the scope of our resources,



PENNY CLAY

are so overwhelming ..."

A series of accidents recently left Sandra's\*\* self-employed husband out of work for months. After the first accident, he could no longer get income protection insurance. With few savings after record interest rates and the inability to sell their home the previous year, Sandra reluctantly approached The Salvation Army (where she had recently begun to worship) for help with a number of bills.

She says: "It is so frightening how quickly life and finances can spiral out of control. You pay everything on time

we are trying to help people in this new group through their financial crisis, recognising that if we can support them even with a few extra resources, it may help them back on to steadier ground. It is so important that they do not slip further into the welfare cycle," she says.

Carol Ennis from The Salvation Army Community Welfare Centre at Chatswood on Sydney's north shore says that recently staff have seen a number of business people presenting for help who had previously been donors to The Salvation Army.

She says: "They are embarrassed about having to seek assistance, often quite emotional ... and trying to cope with losing their homes, jobs, and their status in the community. In some cases the severe financial strain has caused their marriages to break down ... Some are feeling suicidal because their debts

your whole life and yet it is mind-blowing how quickly the letters of demand come once you start to struggle. I would regularly sit on our back steps in tears, physically sick with the stress. My husband could only work two weeks in four months but, while he was healing, all our business overhead costs, the insurances, and the licences just kept on coming.

"Asking for help was so hard, but taught us great lessons as a family about God's grace, the kindness of others and about humility. We know that many other people are suffering so much more than us and realise how important it is to begin supporting others in need in the same way as soon as we get back on our feet," she says. ○

\*NAMES AND SOME CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGED.

\*\*NAME CHANGED.

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.**

- Worship and church programs
- Community services
- How I may become a member of The Red Shield Club (our donor association)
- Wills and bequests

## My contact details

Title Mr / Mrs / Miss / Ms / Dr

Given name

Surname

Address

Suburb

State

Postcode

Phone ( )

Email

## I would like to donate \$ \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

- Cheque/ money order payable to The Salvation Army
- Credit card  Visa  Mastercard
- Diners  Amex

No

Name on card

Expiry / Signature

Please be assured your details remain confidential. Donations are tax deductible. Donate by credit card by phoning **13 SALVOS (13 72 58)** or log onto **salvos.org.au/ots**

*Letters & feedback welcome!*