

Freedom to thrive

“Many of these kids had never even left the estate – they’d never travelled further than the next suburb. So every single experience we can offer them, a trip to the city to see the Sydney Opera House or the Botanical Gardens, or a canoeing adventure, is a real ‘journey’ for them. These experiences really help change their entire outlook. You can almost see them grow before your eyes.” MARK ANSONS

It was the children who shocked Mark Ansons the first day he visited the notorious housing estate in the Hunter region that he and his wife Margaret now call home.

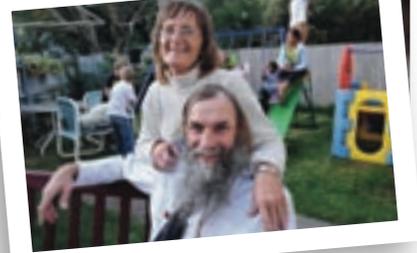
Mark initially visited the area, which had a terrible reputation for violence, to help move an elderly couple out of the complex.

Before coming to a Christian faith a few years earlier, Mark had ridden with a bikie gang, so was not easily shocked. However, as a father and grandfather, what worried him even more than what appeared to be drug deals going on in broad daylight, was that in the middle of a school day, there were so many kids simply hanging around.

Mark says: “I asked what they were doing there and they were either on suspension or just didn’t bother to go to school. I went back to my Corps



ABOVE: MARK AND MARGARET ANSONS WITH LOCAL KIDS.



officer (minister), Topher Holland at Salvos Eastlakes and said ‘something’s got to be done!’”

So, instead of retiring as they had been considering, Mark and Margaret (in consultation with the NSW Department of Housing and their **Salvation Army** Eastlakes Corps/church), moved into a townhouse within the estate. They named the venture ‘Hope House’.

Mark says: “There’s a kid’s play area in the complex but, in order to use it, each day we need to clean up syringes, smashed up bricks and glass. So one of the first things we did was concentrate on creating safe areas in and around the house.”

Two years on, the Ansons run a range of programs including a community bus, community café, grocery shopping expeditions, homework club (together with a paid support worker) and have a professional drug and alcohol counsellor visit weekly.

They also organise a range of outings and school holiday activities and, together with Eastlakes Corps, have started a ‘suspension school’ program.

Mark says: “We had three kids from the complex, who were totally disinterested and disconnected from school, go on to win school awards during the year. As the kids’ confidence and sense of pride grows, their behaviour improves and they then support each other. The teachers then respond positively and it also flows on through the community.”

Donna, who has lived in the housing complex for nine years, says: “At first, I actually felt sorry for them! I thought, ‘I don’t think these people know what they’ve got themselves in for!’ But, I can’t believe the change. It’s amazing.”

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Thank you Australia!

Thank you to all our generous supporters and volunteers who helped achieve a national Red Shield Appeal result which is climbing towards \$96 million to date. This includes disaster relief monies received in response to a string of natural disasters and despite the impact of the economic downturn.

Doorknock weekend raised \$6.3 million nationally, which is an inspiring result given many Salvation Army personnel, who were involved in the Doorknock, were also feeding people affected by floods at evacuation centres in Ballina, Coffs Harbour, Byron Bay and Kempsey.

Thanks also to so many volunteers who braved wild weather throughout Southern Queensland and Northern NSW to collect funds on Doorknock weekend.

FedEx Support

FedEx Express has presented The Salvation Army Emergency Services with a disaster recovery unit specially designed to provide catering for up to 3,000 persons per day in a disaster zone.



Share the Warmth

Canberrans have donated spare blankets, doonas and warm clothing to an appeal by Bell's Dry Cleaners, who cleaned the garments for free before distribution through The Salvation Army.

Caring for men in Blokes, tools and mateship

"We've got a new gentleman here who's made his own lovely furniture from local timber. When we first met he said to me, 'I've heard about an activity you've got here – 'Tool Time'. And I said, 'yes, would you be interested in coming and having a look?' 'Oh, I'd love it', he said. 'I'd just love it!' "
DIVERSIONAL THERAPIST KERRY PETLEY

How does a man who was once highly active, maybe even built his own home, or worked extensively with his hands, cope with moving into aged care?

This was the question Diversional Therapist Kerry Petley and volunteer, Frank Gregory, asked themselves when looking at the male residents, who make up around one-third of the population living at The Salvation Army's Riverview Gardens Aged Care facility in Queensland.

The Riverview centre offers 118 hostel beds in 26 independent living units, plus a 25-bed dementia specialist unit, as well as a newly opened state-of-the-art 50-bed high care facility* for the frail elderly. The service has a commitment to excellence of care for residents physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually.

Kerry and Frank observed that while many of the services' female residents seemed to thrive on the social environment, including craft and other activities, a significant number of men tended to be more withdrawn. So, they started the Tool Time program (predominantly for the blokes, but also attended by one female resident).

And the program has proven to be a huge hit!

Participants have already completed a range of projects including covers for the bus shelters and toys to sell at the centre's fete.

Kerry says: "The program has worked so well, not only because of the woodwork, but also because of the social interaction. We have men coming to Tool Time every week, who wouldn't

normally take part in any other activities. They laugh and chat about the projects they are working on. Some don't want to make anything, but they still turn up early every week for the sense of camaraderie."

Kerry says the sense of teamwork is "just magnificent", as some participants may, for example, have had a stroke or may suffer from arthritis. She says: "One will hold onto the wood while the other sands, or someone will hold onto a board while another saws it. It really has created a rich sense of community among many of the residents.

"On top of the joy of getting out and about, and the fun of sharing an interest with friends, Tool Time gives a great sense of purpose, and that is just vital!"

* The Riverview expansion is one of three recently-completed Salvation Army aged care projects. Salvation Army Aged Care Property Projects Administrator Paul Campbell says "This [Riverview] is The Salvation Army at its best. The project was \$360,000 under budget and allowed for expansion of a further 40 beds."



ABOVE: VOLUNTEER FRANK GREGORY AND RIVERVIEW GARDENS RESIDENT WORK HARD AT TOOL TIME.

our community

Crossing the road to friendship

There are jokes flying and explosions of laughter from the group of men gathered together at The Salvation Army Algate House 'Shed Craft' (in Broken Hill, NSW). Some are concentrating on various woodworking projects, while others are simply chatting and enjoying the companionship.

Few would believe that long-term member Robert had spent most of his adult life alone in his front yard watching the world pass by. A mild intellectual disability meant that Robert was never able to enter the workforce.

Salvation Army Algate House staff, who worked just over the road, and who run the LISK program for clients with disabilities, would often say hello,

and try to convince Robert to come to the centre for a look. But he was very shy. It wasn't until his mother (and sole carer) had to go to hospital that Robert began to attend.

At first, he was nervous about mixing with the other 23 clients and staff members, and he started with a few hours of cooking and gardening classes. However, three years later, Robert confidently took part in a LISK outing to Dubbo. It was the first time he had ever travelled outside Broken Hill without his family.

Algate House/LISK community worker, Melissa Mahoney says: "The program has helped change Robert's life. Many of our participants' confidence just

takes off and we are fully committed to see each reach their full potential."

The LISK program is a Salvation Army Broken Hill initiative and offers group day programs to 24 clients each week, five days per week. Clients sign up for a variety of courses each term, which include shed craft, literacy and numeracy, computers, music, healthy living, meal and food preparation, and jewellery making.

Because 19 of the current clients are men, centre staff recently introduced a men's health program in addition to the Shed Craft.

Run by community worker, Brett Algate, the health course aims to give male clients a safe environment to talk about health issues.

Brett says: "These guys just thoroughly enjoy the men's health program. Whether they live at home, or in group homes, almost all are single males with disabilities, mostly with female carers. The new men's health program means they can talk about health issues without embarrassment.

"And they all love the Shed Craft. They make pieces of furniture and have a go at the craft. But just as importantly, it's a place where the men can sit down and talk. This gives them a great sense of community and mateship. If they didn't have this place to come to, the reality is that some of these guys would almost never leave their own homes." ○



ABOVE: FEW WOULD BELIEVE THAT LONG-TERM MEMBER ROBERT HAD SPENT MOST OF HIS ADULT LIFE ALONE IN HIS FRONT YARD WATCHING THE WORLD PASS BY. & INSET: ROBERT ENJOYS SPENDING TIME WITH FRIENDS AND STAFF AT ALGATE HOUSE.

SHARON PATERSON

True meaning of beauty

“There are moments of great realisation ... It may be someone like Sharon* realising she has to take ownership for the consequences of her actions before anything can change. It may be a woman who has come from two or three generations of unemployment, slowly realising that she can achieve anything she wants to in life, as long as she is prepared to put in the hard work to make the changes.”

CAPTAIN SANDRA EDGE

Sharon* was introduced to intravenous drugs at the age of 10. By the time she was an adult and a mother of three, despite battling to keep a perfect home and doing everything in her power to hide her addiction from her children and family, her life spiralled out of control and her children were removed from her care.

Eventually, Sharon booked herself into drug and alcohol rehabilitation, and then into a pioneer Salvation Army program called Shekinah, which opened in February 2006. After much hard work at the centre, Sharon has gone on to further her education, maintain her home, regain her family and is currently working at Shekinah, hoping to use her experiences to help others.

Sharon says of the journey she has undertaken: “It took me a long time to understand that what they were telling me (at Shekinah) was the normal life.

“It was ages before I actually realised that ‘hey, it was my fault and the way I was living was wrong. I lost my kids due to my actions,’ and things seemed to fall into place from then on.”

Shekinah is a residential living skills centre for single mothers and their dependent children, who can live



ADAM HOLLINGWORTH

independently in one of four units for a period of six to twelve months.

The mothers undertake two to three daily classes, Monday to Friday, which cover such topics as self-esteem, boundaries, anger management, conflict resolution, craft, women’s health, housekeeping, budgeting, cooking and many others. They also have case management meetings, parenting skills time, house inspections and chaplaincy visits.

Sharon says: “Some days I (still) find it challenging. I feel like a newborn baby just starting over again. My son seems to think I’m a different mum and my girls are very proud of me. They’re very happy with all the work I’ve put together.”

Salvation Army Captain Sandra Edge, who runs the service, says: “Ninety per cent of the problems we see are related to self-esteem, and so an essential part of the process is showing the women who come to us that God truly sees them as beautiful and that who they are, and what they do, are two very different things. That is a huge distinction,” she says.

“At its best, Shekinah absolutely



ABOVE: CAPTAIN SANDRA EDGE (PICTURED WITH SHARON*) SAYS: “SO MANY OF THE WOMEN JUST BLOSSOM DURING THEIR TIME HERE.”

changes lives,” Sandra says. “And, even for those who don’t have dramatic outcomes, or who aren’t able to cope with the structure, any creation of normality and stability is enormously positive. It plants seeds for future growth and confidence.

“So many of the women just blossom during their time here.”

*NAME CHANGED.

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