

# On the Scene

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

## 'Flying Santa' brings joy

"Although the community does not have material wealth, the richness of family life and community pride unite the local population." DEAN SAFFRON

Eyes shining with excitement and expectation, children from the remote Queensland town of Urandangie unwrapped presents donated via the Kmart Wishing Tree Appeal and delivered by Salvation Army 'Santas', Envoys Simon and Natalie Steele.

Very few of the 30 or so local children living in Urandangie, 190 kilometres south-west of Mount Isa, had ever received a Christmas present.

Freelance documentary photographer, Dean Saffron, who was visiting Urandangie in the lead up to Christmas 2008, contacted Simon and Natalie Steele of The Salvation Army Outback Flying Service to see if the Salvos could help.

He described to the Steeles some of the immense challenges and hardships faced by the community of beautiful people in Urandangie including extreme isolation, high living costs, lack of power, water, housing and transport.

Simon and Natalie had already planned to drop toys to a number of remote properties and communities in an 800,000 square kilometre area, stretching from Weipa in the Gulf of Carpentaria to Birdsville to the Northern Territory border, and so added Urandangie to their list of areas to visit.



DEAN SAFFRON

ABOVE: URANDANGIE LOCAL CHILDREN RECEIVE PRESENTS FROM 'SALVOS SANTA'.  
& INSET: SALVATION ARMY FLYING PADRES, SIMON AND NATALIE STEELE.

They say they were absolutely blessed by the opportunity to deliver Christmas gifts to the delighted children and will again this year. Simon says: "That first visit to Urandangie was so special for us. Community members welcomed us so warmly and the children were incredibly appreciative.

"The people are very strong and resilient, and also very warm. We flew in again recently with food and emergency supplies after heavy seasonal rains had cut off the community. While I was there I asked more about some of the challenges. Just to run generators, while paying the huge fuel costs of an isolated community, is absolutely crippling."

Manager of the Dangi Bush Resort, Pam Forster, says of Simon and Natalie's visits:

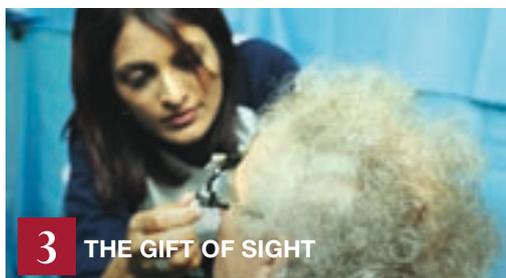
"(Last Christmas) the kids here were just thrilled to bits because most had never had a Christmas.

"People love it here, but can feel forgotten.

"We recently had one couple whose child passed away and it was so good to be able to ring Simon and Natalie for help. They were in the plane in the next two hours and they were out here. They did the funeral and it was their first ever I believe, and it was just beautiful.

"They are lovely people and (their care) lets locals know that they're not forgotten. It's just lovely!"

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**CHRISTMAS APPEAL**  
THANK GOD FOR THE SALVOS

## Salvos at Christmas

For information about Salvation Army community Christmas lunches, carols and church service times, reflections on the meaning of Christmas, and ways to support The Salvation Army at Christmas, please visit our website at [salvos.org.au/Christmas](http://salvos.org.au/Christmas) or to donate call **13 SALVOS (13 72 58)**.

And from all at The Salvation Army, as we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, we wish you a happy, holy and safe Christmas!

## Inner beauty

Current Miss World Australia, Sophie Lavers, is as much at home serving food to the homeless as she is wearing an evening gown. When Sophie's mother showed her the (Salvation Army) Oasis DVD, launched on ABC TV last year, she knew this was the organisation she wanted to be involved with.

Sophie now raises funds for The Salvation Army's Oasis Youth Support Network, and volunteers at the Salvos' Street Level Café, which provides meals to the homeless and disadvantaged.

## Dangers of early drinking

New Roy Morgan research, released by The Salvation Army in September, revealed that 2.3 million Australians had their first taste of alcohol when they were just 10 years of age or under and 12.1 million Australians are not aware of new national guidelines on alcohol which indicate that for 15-17 year olds, the safest option is to delay the initiation of drinking for as long as possible. More information at [salvos.org.au/alcohol](http://salvos.org.au/alcohol)

# Triumph over tragedy

"Leaving Darwin and relocating to Sydney, everything was gone. We were met by the Salvos who cared for us, put a roof over our heads and helped us get our lives back into some semblance of order." RON WILSON

The world turned upside down for Ron Wilson, Channel 10 Newsreader, in the early hours of Christmas Day 1974, when shortly after midnight, Cyclone Tracy hit Darwin with unimaginable ferocity.

Ron, who was a university student at the time, together with family members, joined well over thirty-thousand people who urgently had to be fed, clothed and evacuated from Darwin. **The Salvation**

**Army** helped Ron get work, and rented and furnished a unit for the family. Ron said it was what got them started.

This year, Ron has thrown his wholehearted support behind The Salvation Army's 2009 Christmas Appeal, and has also supported the Salvos in a variety of roles for over 30 years.

Ron says: "Since Cyclone Tracy, I've stayed involved with the Salvos and have seen first-hand the selfless work they do. Showing my support for them is my way of saying thank you, and giving something back to those who gave me and my family so much."

For more information or to donate, visit [salvos.org.au/otscahelp](http://salvos.org.au/otscahelp)

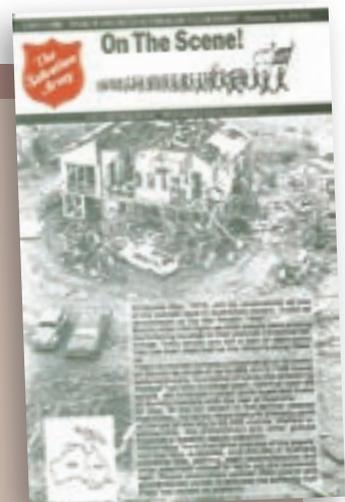


ABOVE: RON WILSON, CHANNEL 10 NEWSREADER, WITH MAJOR RAY ALLEN WHO WORKED ON THE FRONT-LINE OF CYCLONE TRACY 35 YEARS AGO.

## Cyclone Tracy births *On the Scene*

The very first *On the Scene* (OTS) was published on January 5, 1975 as the "Cyclone Tracy Disaster Progress Report". Today OTS is read by around 400,000 Salvation Army supporters, four times each year.

Salvation Army Communications Director, Captain Peter McGuigan, says: "The work of The Salvation Army in Australia is so vast and diverse that we could never give an account of it all in *On the Scene*. But we strive prayerfully to paint a picture of this work for the many thousands of Australians who partner with us to make this nation a better place for all. It is a picture of the real passion, the real people, the real stories, the real triumphs, and, sadly sometimes, the real heartbreak, that is the mission of The Salvation Army."



# Sight on the streets



ADAM HOLLINGWORTH

“We recently came across an older homeless man, a Vietnam vet, who was virtually blind. I don’t know how he managed to survive living rough on the streets. I tried to convince him to have his eyes tested, but he told me in very colourful language that there was just no point. But we talked to him and when he finally got his glasses, he was so excited that he could see for the first time in years. It was such a beautiful moment!” SALVATION ARMY MAJOR HILTON HARMER OAM

Once a month, a **Salvation Army** van parks in the darkened streets where homeless people sleep in nooks and crannies. The van’s headlights and a spotlight are used to illuminate a small table, two chairs and reading chart.

At this extreme edge of homelessness a volunteer team, that includes ‘retired’ Salvation Army Major Hilton Harmer (Inner City Chaplain, The Salvation Army Sydney Congress Hall), offers an eye-care service to those sleeping rough in the inner city.

As volunteer optometrist Susan Thompson, who initiated the unique eye-care service, works with homeless clients, Hilton mans the spotlight.

Asked why he bothers to run a street eye clinic, Hilton says: “Many of the people we see on the streets once held jobs and had homes. However



ABOVE: MAJOR HILTON HARMER OAM DISTRIBUTES BLANKETS AS A PART OF AN EYE-CARE SERVICE TO THOSE LIVING ON THE STREET. & INSET: VOLUNTEER OPTOMETRIST, SUSAN THOMPSON.

addiction, mental health issues, and depression become a downward cycle and in the end they completely lack the ability to make a proper appointment, or get to it.

“The eye service offers a full eye test. In most cases prescription glasses are provided immediately. Glasses that need to be made up are ready to hand out within a week,” Hilton says.

“It’s simple and no frills, but effective. People who couldn’t see are getting glasses, and now they can see. They say things like, ‘oh I can actually

## Sight in Salvos services

As part of a joint initiative by The Salvation Army and Luxottica’s charitable vision foundation OneSight, around 400 residents from Salvation Army centres in inner-Sydney\* were offered free eye tests and treatment earlier this year at The Salvation Army’s Foster House. Further eye screenings are also planned for Salvation Army clients around Australia over the following months.

More than 155,000 Australians in need have been assisted by OneSight, its volunteers and donors, in the past seven years, including more than 2,300 through The Salvation Army.

Major Marina Randall, Community Support Services Consultant for The Salvation Army says: “A large part of our role is to help keep homeless people from going further into a downward spiral, and maintaining overall health is a critical part of that. The OneSight partnership is invaluable in detecting and treating eye problems, which are usually unnoticed when people have so much other stress in their lives.”

According to Marina, the largest group of people coming through The Salvation Army’s doors over the past four months has been single parents with children.

“Work, education, especially for youth and children, and being able to engage with the wider society is enhanced when someone has the confidence that comes with being able to see clearly,” she says.

\* These included Foster House homeless complex, William Booth Recovery Services Centre, Samaritan House women’s crisis complex, Oasis Youth Support Network and Sydney Street Level Mission.

read the street signs’, and they are absolutely over the moon.” 

# Feeding beyond food

“We all need an environment where people talk to us, know our names, know where we live, what we feel, where they ‘do life’ with us. We all need a place where we feel accepted and respected – but all too often that’s completely lacking in the lives of those who are marginalised and rejected by society.”

JAYNE WILSON

Salvation Army drug and alcohol counsellor Maris Depers, who had counselled hundreds of people through **The Salvation Army** First Floor Restoration Program in Wollongong (NSW) in the past year, was finalising some Christmas shopping with his wife.

As they paused for a break at the shopping mall, they overheard a conversation, which, Maris says, proved to be a beautiful way to end the year.

As we approach Christmas 2009, Maris explains:

“I overheard a man talking about an eating experience he’d recently had.

“He was telling a friend how he had a great meal at a very posh local restaurant, with a voucher. Although he was behind me, I could hear the excitement in his voice as he retold how he had gone to the restaurant, not knowing what to expect, and was greeted by a waitress. He described how he had been given a proper menu and had ordered an awesome meal consisting of an entrée, a full meal and a coffee. He described how the interior was polished marble and glass and real fancy, and how he sat and ate until he was full.

“That restaurant is actually a hospitality-training bistro (also open to the public) which is part of the First Floor Restoration Centre. It provides volunteer



SHARON PATTERSON

ABOVE: ENJOYING A MEAL AT THE SALVATION ARMY FIRST FLOOR RESTORATION CENTRE CAFE.

on-the-job hospitality training for those who need re-skilling or want to find a way to be productive during the day.

“The voucher is a new meal program, a joint initiative between our centre and the adjoining Salvation Army Community Services Centre, where marginalised people who come in for welfare help are also provided with a \$15 bistro voucher.

“The experiences which make up the lives of many of the people I encounter each day in my role as counsellor include addiction, abuse, trauma, crime, violence, unemployment and depression. Each one of these can detach an individual from the community around them.

“And so, the meal program, although small, offers something incredibly significant. It provides nourishment far beyond food. It creates an opportunity for recipients to feel connected to their community, one meal at a time.

“To be handed a menu, to choose your own meal and to be served by a waitress are small gestures which most of us wouldn’t even notice. But this place and these small gestures were everything to this man who was treated to a dining experience that he may never forget.”

Jayne Wilson, Program Manager of The Salvation Army’s First Floor Restoration Centre says: “Rather than just giving handouts and encouraging dependence, we wanted to offer an alternative service that normalises the experience of eating in surroundings where connection and community create a sense of inclusion and dignity.

“God has blessed us with a great hospitality environment which is the open door to the variety of services on offer, overseen by a team of men and women with a passion for the people they serve.”

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!*