

On the Scene

AUTUMN 2010 NEWS AND STORIES FROM THE SALVATION ARMY AUSTRALIA EASTERN TERRITORY

Unbearable pain, unimaginable joy

“I think about it as a father and the anguish I would feel if I was ever separated from one of my children. Not knowing if they were alive, dead or in pain – the emotional torture would be unbearable.” CAPTAIN NESAN KISTAN

Twelve years ago, Margaret Yongai’s husband was shot dead in front of her while her six-year-old daughter, Marian, was stolen by machete-wielding child soldiers. A deliberately-lit fire ravaged the family home killing, Margaret believes, her parents, brothers, sisters and other relatives.

At the time, Sierra Leone, in West Africa, was in the midst of a terrible civil war. Murder and mutilation of innocent civilians was commonplace.

Margaret managed to run into nearby bush to hide her two sons. She then ran back into her burning village to find her daughter, but the rebels already had Marian. Hungry and heartbroken, the surviving trio eventually made it to an overstretched refugee camp in Guinea.

Four years on, Margaret and her boys arrived in Australia as part of a resettlement program.

Later enquiries revealed that Marian may have survived, and so Margaret approached **The Salvation Army’s** free legal assistance program, Courtyard Legal (see overleaf). Marian was located, identified and finally united with her family in Sydney, with the help of funds raised by the members of The Salvation Army Auburn (Sydney) Corps (church).



SHARON PATTERSON

ABOVE: MARGARET AND MARIAN REUNITED.

Margaret says: “My long suffering is over. I thought my daughter was dead. God has done a miracle!”

In addition to hosting Courtyard Legal, the Salvos at Auburn hold classes in English, cooking, homework club, welfare centre, the Positive Work Choice program, restoration groups, camps and an African shop, assisting 800 people each week.

Captain Nesan Kistan says: “Auburn is a major area for processing newly-arrived migrants and a number remain here.

“These people have suffered enormously and many have been tortured terribly. They tell stories of soldiers coming in and asking if they prefer short

or long sleeves to determine where their arms would be cut off.”

Nesan says that despite the pain and problems that these backgrounds can bring, there is also a great sense of joy in the community.

He says: “To see them smiling is just breathtaking. It is beautiful to see how God can heal and put pieces of people’s lives back together.”

Nesan says that those helped by the centre are also very keen to go on to help others. He says: “I had a very proud man say to me recently, ‘Pastor, this is my home and this country has given me so, so very much, and I will do all I can to repay it!’”

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We need you!

The Salvation Army needs volunteer collectors for the 2010 Red Shield Appeal Doorknock to be held on the weekend 29-30 May. The Red Shield Appeal helps finance The Salvation Army's vast network of social and community services.

Come along yourself, or organise a team of friends or workmates. The Doorknock is great fun and only takes a few hours. To volunteer, call **13 SALVOS (13 72 58)** or visit salvos.org.au

Bushfire anniversary

As people affected by the Victorian bushfires work to get back on their feet, one year on, The Salvation Army continues supporting them on their journey. The Salvation Army has taken a personal, individualised approach to bushfire recovery, providing ongoing support and assistance to those affected. For the latest report, visit salvos.org.au/bushfires

32,000 To Go

The Salvation Army Oasis Youth Support Network has launched 32000togo.com.au suggesting a range of community action to help combat shocking youth homelessness statistics.

Furnish with a conscience

A range of designers and celebrities threw their weight behind The Salvation Army Salvos Stores 'Furnish with a conscience' campaign, to encourage us all to 're-use, reduce and help others'. Find out more at fwac.com.au

Light of the world

The Salvation Army recently ran an advertising campaign promoting a message about the person of Jesus and his love for all. For more information, or to order a free book or Bible, visit salvos.org.au/light

Living justice – Salvos establish legal service

"People come here because they can't afford a solicitor or they have no idea how to approach legal services. Often people come because they're just confused by the courts. (Here) they feel safe and are able to open up." THEA FIELEN, COURTYARD LEGAL VOLUNTEER

In 2005, Luke Geary, a corporate lawyer (and youngest partner in the firm, Mills Oakley) was approached by friends from the Salvos at Auburn to help a local grandmother to regain access to her grandchildren.

The case was successful and Luke, who has a passion for helping those in need, was asked to take on one after the other until 'Courtyard Legal' was officially born. The free service now runs one evening each week, at **The Salvation Army** Auburn and The Salvation Army Parramatta, to assist those who cannot afford legal support.

Luke says: "We are different to other free legal centres because we don't just give advice but we take cases on full-

time, as if the people that come to see us are paying clients.

"In this area you get clients who are (feeling) attacked on all fronts – financially, emotionally and physically. Certainly, none of them could afford a lawyer to act on their behalf."

Demand has been great and the results extremely positive in the 700 cases Luke, and a small team of fellow volunteers, have taken on. They are backed up by a wider network of around 60 law students, paralegals, barristers and other industry professionals who give their time freely and have had substantial support from Mills Oakley Lawyers.

Responding to the overwhelming demand, The Salvation Army recently decided to establish its own full legal service throughout NSW, Queensland and ACT. It is the first time The Salvation Army has taken on the running of a legal service and it's hoped the 'Courtyard Legal' model will eventually be replicated around the world.

Luke has now left corporate life to work on the project full-time.

"Without faith, I would have given up a long time ago," Luke says smiling. "The opposition is almost always much better resourced than we are, and our clients are (often) already downtrodden and have lost belief in the legal system.

"But each case, no matter who the client may be, is the most important case for them. To be part of a team that plays a pivotal role in something of such importance to an individual in need is immensely rewarding." ○



ABOVE: LUKE GEARY, WHO HEADS UP 'COURTYARD LEGAL'

Anger management in schools

“Anger is a normal part of life, but many children don’t have the skills to deal with their emotions or frustrations. Teaching students to manage their anger can significantly reduce harmful behaviour such as bullying, vandalism and self-harm in a school community.”

KAREN CONNORS

When natural disaster turns a family or community upside down, children’s lives and emotions can be thrown into turmoil. When this is coupled with stresses of family life, the situation can lead to depression and aggression in children.

Following the Canberra bushfires of 2003, local **Salvation Army** personnel were contacted by two concerned primary school principals for help to support struggling students.

The relationship with those schools was so successful that The Salvation Army eventually appointed two permanent School Community Workers. Together, with a group of Salvation Army volunteers, they now work in nine state primary schools and one high school in the ACT.

Salvation Army Schools ACT Community Worker (and qualified teacher) Craig Middelgouw says: “We were initially contacted by two schools after the fires, and asked to come in and just talk with the kids and play a bit of sport. Lots of the kids had lost homes and depression was beginning to set in. There were also behavioural issues emerging and some kids were finding it quite hard to settle back to learning.

“We built great partnerships, and the schools just kept asking us back. Then as teachers eventually moved to other schools in the area, those schools contacted us too.”

Today, the Salvos team offers a wide variety of programs, tailored to the needs of struggling students including breakfast clubs, homework support and mentoring for children needing special support.

The latest program is The Salvation Army’s ‘Red Cap’ anger management program for 8 to 12 year olds. The program runs over an 8 to 10 week period and uses the metaphor of a traffic



ABOVE: THE ‘RED CAPS’ PROGRAM ASSISTING KIDS WHO STRUGGLE WITH ANGER MANAGEMENT.

light to encourage kids to stop (red), think (yellow) and problem solve (green), when facing stressful situations.

Craig says that the program offers not only anger management training, but also offers great communication and leadership skills when children are given a sense of responsibility.

He says: “We have a young man in early high school whom we have known since he was affected by the fires. School is a great struggle for him. There is pain in the family and his life is really tough. But the one thing he just loves is coming to our kids club and youth group. He feels like he’s wanted and has responsibility. It seems to be the only place where his confidence is built up. It has been six years now and he never, ever misses.”

Karen Connors, who oversees the Salvos work in schools for The Salvation

Army ACT and South NSW Division says: “We believe it is so important to help address the things that make it difficult for young people and families in our society.

“One of the places where children spend a lot of time is in schools. So we help by providing a breakfast, helping kids to have better relationships with each other and helping kids during lunch-times who are feeling isolated and need to learn how to make friendships and join into a group.”

She says the ‘Red Cap’ program will offer even greater support to children who have serious emotional issues.

“If those issues are left until high school, or even later to be dealt with, they can become very difficult. ‘Red Cap’ and the other programs help to give kids skills for life. We believe it benefits not only those kids, but our whole society.” ○

