



On the Scene

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

Help when a whole town hurts

“I was speaking a few months ago to one (of approximately 140) local professional prawn fisherman. He’d never asked for help in any way and he said, in tears, ‘you know the only way I thought I could get through this was to float the boat out onto the river and set it alight with me on it.’ I was able to counsel him and help with some bills and, so far, he’s okay. We are working to do all we can to support these families.”

STEVE SPENCER

Earlier this year, Steve and Lydia Spencer, who run the **The Salvation Army** in Maclean (NSW), received a call from NSW Health, as their workers were concerned for the welfare of the families who fish professionally on the Clarence River. Severe flooding had washed the year’s major haul of prawns out to sea and subsequent tests of the river showed little renewal of fish and prawn stock.

A number of the men were expressing suicidal thoughts. Many had loans for their boats, business overheads and housing costs, and had suddenly found themselves with no income, no other training and unable to claim government benefits.

Steve Spencer says: “We are seeing the first signs of families now being evicted from homes.

“These families would normally be spending the most money in the



ABOVE: LOCAL PRAWN FISHERMEN ON THE CLARENCE RIVER.

community and the flow-on effect can be felt throughout the Clarence Valley.”

Fisherman Stephen Pilcher is the sole breadwinner for his family of four. “It’s been really stressful,” he says, “the bills just keep coming in and (it’s a struggle) when you don’t have the money coming in to pay them...”

The Salvation Army was able to significantly help around 100 of the families with food, utility bills, medical costs, rent, counselling, retraining information and family days.

Earlier this year, the local meat processing plant in Young (NSW), which employed around 300 locals, suddenly closed. The impact has been devastating on workers as well as small businesses and service providers throughout the town, according to Laurel Merrin from The Salvation Army in Young.

As well as organising referrals to

counsellors and practical support, The Salvation Army in Young worked with a range of local organisations to provide financial information and re-training help.

Laurel says, “There are few jobs available, so it wasn’t easy for people to just go and find other work.”

Many of these folk had never asked for assistance before, and some had actually supported The Salvation Army in better times. Laurel says: “(So) many men have sat here in tears. We had a man who was getting food from supermarket bins to feed his family, too embarrassed to ask for welfare.

“He sat on the chair with tears dripping down his face. We were able to say ‘you don’t have to feel like a charity case...The Lord asked all of us to help one another on this earth, and if we don’t do it, we fail to do our jobs.’”

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RED SHIELD APPEAL
THANK GOD FOR THE SALVOS

Thank you Australia

Salvation Army Appeal Director Major Jeff Winterburn has thanked all Australians who contributed so generously to the 2010 Red Shield Appeal, which raised \$77 million nationally.

He also thanked the volunteers who helped on Doorknock weekend, which raised almost \$9.9 million across Australia.

“Without this support,” Major Winterburn says, “we would not be able to continue assisting those who are disadvantaged and marginalised in our community.”

Commitment to Aged Care

Three residents, over 100 years old, assisted Commissioner Linda Bond open a new 90-bed wing at The Salvation Army Macquarie Lodge residential centre in Sydney’s south in April, complementing the existing independent living units on the site.

Out of the cold

The number of people who presented for help at Salvos welfare centres and reported being homeless or sleeping rough/ in cars/ in tents increased by 55% across NSW, ACT and Qld from 2008 to 2010.

In response, Australian philanthropist Dick Smith has donated \$1 million to purchase three houses to support families in regional areas at risk of homelessness, and has challenged the business community to dig deep to help address the problem.

Research released by The Salvation Army in May also revealed that 20%, equating to around 80,000, of people coming to the Salvos during 2009 had never previously asked for help. Visit salvos.org.au for more info.

Salvos couple honoured



ABOVE: CAPTAINS PAUL AND ROBBIN MOULDS, RECENTLY MADE MEMBERS IN THE GENERAL DIVISION OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA (AM).

“As young people just out of our teens, and volunteering with The Salvation Army in Kings Cross, we both wanted to make a positive difference in the world. Our motivation for doing this work is the love of God, we ourselves have experienced, and Jesus’ call not to live selfishly, but to bring hope and light to those living in despair and darkness.”

CAPTAIN ROBBIN MOULDS AM

Salvation Army officer Captain Robbin Moulds moves through The Salvation Army Streetlevel centre (Surry Hills, Sydney NSW), encouraging interns, chatting with staff, answering enquiries and passionately lobbying visiting politicians. But Robbin’s most heartfelt “hello beautiful” (her favourite greeting), is saved for the Streetlevel community members – the marginalised and dispossessed people of the inner city.

They come from the streets, or from flea and bed-bug infested squats or boarding houses. Many are lonely, addicted and mentally ill, and many become part of the Streetlevel ‘family’, encouraged to eventually support others and grow.

Very early in their adult lives, Robbin and husband Paul knew they wanted to dedicate their lives to offer “a voice for those with no voice”.

Both Robbin and Paul were recently made Members in the General Division of the Order of Australia (AM). Paul is the Director of OASIS – a Salvation Army network of services working with homeless youth in Sydney, and Robbin works closely with him, also managing Streetlevel.

The award recognised their extraordinary efforts in seeking to improve the circumstances and futures of disadvantaged and marginalised Australians, particularly young people.

Paul says: “Many people are still excluded from enjoying the opportunities Australia provides and the most important remedy for this situation is having dedicated people working on the front lines of human need. I hope this award inspires other Australians to consider dedicating their lives to this cause.

“It has involved sacrifice and there have been many tough days, but the joy of seeing lives transformed, and people rediscovering hope, makes every sacrifice and every tear worthwhile.”

Creating healthy communities for all children

“We looked at where the gaps were within the community through consultation. We did this by talking to the children (too)... One little boy, quite horrifically, at four years old said when he grows up he wants to hit women like his dad does and used a string of expletives to explain what women were...that’s how he had been socialised.” GERALDINE HARRIS

For many years, The Salvation Army’s Major Colin Hopper knew there were a wide range of complex challenges and social needs in the communities of Kingston, Loganlea and Waterford West (on Brisbane’s outskirts).

He could see great strengths in these vibrant communities, which included a large and linguistically diverse migrant and refugee population and a large Indigenous population, but could also see the desperately negative effect that social and economic disadvantage was having on many of the local children.

So, five years ago, when the Federal Government called for organisations to tender support for children in disadvantaged communities (eight across Queensland, 45 throughout Australia), Colin and his team put up their hands. They soon appointed Geraldine Harris as Program Manager.

Geraldine says that the team is seeing lives transformed and positive benefits flowing into the community every day.

She says: “We have seen so many positive outcomes. One father came to our Indigenous community workers talking about suicide... his children would possibly soon be removed into foster care.

“He was given a little bit of part-time work and food parcels, and a worker said, ‘how about you take some books home and read them to the kids and tell me what difference it makes.’ He came back two days later and said ‘we’ve read every book two or three times, the kids love them, and can we change them over and get some new ones?’

“He now has a full-time job, has discovered a passion for parenting and the family dynamic has completely changed.

“It can be simple sometimes – just someone finding a sense of belonging



SHARON PATTERSON



LEFT: THERE ARE MANY POSITIVE OUTCOMES AS A RESULT OF THE PROGRAM. & INSET: MAJORS SUE AND COLIN HOPPER WHO OVERSEE THE PROGRAM.

or a trusting relationship. We are there to facilitate and to offer opportunities for change, not to tell people what to do.”

The team designed a model which works through ‘hub’ sites, where already existing neighbourhood centres run an integrated program of parenting sessions, bonding programs, play groups, literacy programs, infant movement programs and healthy eating sessions. Programs also run in local schools to help teenagers understand the social, emotional, financial and physical implications of young pregnancy.

The impact on the local communities and beyond has been phenomenal, according to Geraldine. Training material designed by the team is now being used in a range of universities and training organisations around Australia. A second round of Federal funding recently added an additional \$2.5 million to the Logan-based service, to expand the program from birth to five years, up to 12 years.

The team was recently called to help deal with the discovery that a number of young primary students were heavily ‘chroming’ – sniffing solvents to get high. In some disadvantaged communities, they might have fallen

through the cracks, but through a collaboration of a local school, government services and The Salvation Army/Communities for Children, they were offered counselling, a range of healthy diversionary activities and their families were given parenting support.

Seven of those young people have emerged “very strongly” with excitement for their future, according to Geraldine, and the team is still working with the others. Geraldine says: “These children have gone from the beginning of a very dire pathway, to turning around and (now seeing) the world as their oyster.

“We are seeing incredible things,” Geraldine says.

“I bumped into three workers in our community the other day. (They were) mums who’d been through many of our programs and had faced quite significant issues such as post-natal depression, social isolation and domestic violence. One was now a volunteer on the management committee at one of our community centres, the other now a worker with a government literacy program and the other working with play groups and children’s services... They had each gone on to do something (really positive) for themselves and their community.” ○

Love from pain

"I'd never gone to The Salvation Army for help before. I just never knew how to ask but I was amazed at...how accepting the people at the Salvos are."

LOUISE HARRIS

Louise Harris couldn't believe it when her flatmate kicked her out. The 32-year-old TAFE student was suddenly homeless and unable to find enough money at short notice to secure her own rental property. A long-term sufferer of Crohn's disease, she turned to her doctor for advice. He referred her to **The Salvation Army**.

Louise found shelter at Pindari (Qld) – a crisis accommodation service for women who are homeless. At around the same time, Matt Hitzman arrived at the reception of the Pindari Men's Hostel, located on the same site.

Unlike Louise, 35-year-old Matt was no stranger to homeless shelters. "I was never socially accepted as a kid and always picked on during school... Then I found myself being socially accepted [by] people who dealt in drugs, so I started doing drugs."

Matt's first contact with The Salvation Army came when he made a decision to turn his life around, in early 2000, and entered the Salvos' Moonyah Recovery Services Centre, in Brisbane. The assistant manager at the time, Major Bryce Davies says: "He was a friendly and sincere guy but he'd been hurt in his life. He'd been bullied and those sorts of things, so he had a pretty low self-esteem and lots of challenges to overcome."

Despite several unsuccessful stints at rehab, Matt persevered. He finally became clean and sober three years ago and undertook numeracy and literacy programs whilst in rehabilitation, and discovered a passion for learning.

Whilst at Pindari, both Matt and



ABOVE: MATT HITZMAN AND LOUISE HARRIS AT THEIR FAVOURITE SPOT, KANGAROO POINT.

Louise received counselling and support from Salvation Army staff, where the aim is to help clients move from situations of homelessness to sustainable, independent living. During this time the pair met through mutual friends at the service. They soon started to spend lots of time together, talking and admiring the view of the Brisbane River at Kangaroo Point. Love soon blossomed.

Pindari staff encourage clients to attend chapel at The Salvation Army Streetlevel Mission (church) in inner Brisbane, where Matt reconnected with Major Bryce Davies. "The thing that really struck me was there's a really lovely acceptance of each other's past [and present]... journey", says Major Davies.

"Louise has significant health problems and Matthew's completely understanding... and supportive about all those health issues. And Louise obviously has an awareness of Matt's past and some of the lingering issues of addiction and she's very patient with that."

Matt and Louise are now committed attendees of The Salvation Army's Streetlevel Mission and volunteer their time to help run the mission's services. These include providing a family meal for

people each week and running a pamper day for women from the surrounding shelters and Salvo services.

Major Bryce Davies recently married the couple in the presence of their Streetlevel family. Matt and Louise say they've been blown away by the support the Salvos have given them over the past year.

Matt says: "Time and time again, on TV and on the radio, you hear 'Thank God for the Salvos' but it's not until you're really down and out that you can truly know what those words mean."

The couple is looking forward to the birth of their first child in September. Matt now has employment as a youth worker – a fulfilment of his dream to help other troubled young people take steps towards recovery. Louise is recommencing her studies.

Louise says: "We just want to have a happy and healthy family. And to continue our bond with Streetlevel Mission, and our volunteer work there, in order to give back a little of what's been given to us." ○

People featured in photographs in this newsletter (and past editions) are not necessarily the clients of the services.

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!