

On the Scene

AUTUMN 2011 NEWS AND STORIES FROM THE SALVATION ARMY AUSTRALIA EASTERN TERRITORY

Flood crisis – Salvos respond



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: THE FLOOD CRISIS; 'THE FLYING PADRE'; PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHER AGENCIES TO TACKLE THE CRISIS; EVACUATION CENTRE; THE CLEAN-UP BEGINS

The thoughts and prayers of all within The Salvation Army are with the people of the devastated regions of Queensland and NSW, especially those who have lost loved ones in the flood crisis.

As the flood waters recede and the enormity of the devastation is revealed, **The Salvation Army** volunteers and chaplains across the states are continuing to help those affected, providing food, water and much needed moral support.

In many centres across the regions, Salvation Army Emergency Services teams have been working around the clock, in partnership with other agencies, focussing on ensuring people are well fed and cared for.

The Salvation Army Outback Flying Service has also been able to help deliver vital

supplies to properties and relief centres cut off by flood waters during the crisis, thanks to the newly commissioned helicopter.

Major Glenn Whittaker of The Salvation Army praised the generosity of Australians, saying, "We've been overwhelmed by the level of support for The Salvation Army Flood Appeal and we'd like to say a heartfelt thanks to all who have so generously given.

"At this stage we have only been accepting financial donations as this allows us to aid the community immediately. This also allows the people affected to recover with dignity by purchasing items they need most which, in turn, injects much needed funds into the local economy.

"In fact, The Salvation Army was able to release more than half a million dollars to flood-affected communities in Queensland

during the earliest days of the crisis."

Glenn says the process of rebuilding and recovery will be long and complex. "We will continue to work where needed to assist people moving back into their communities and to provide practical support during the massive clean-up effort. We will continue to be there for the communities for as long as it takes.

"We remind anyone who is feeling overwhelmed by emotional issues and in need of a listening ear that our Salvo Care Line telephone counselling service is available 24 hours, seven days a week, on **1300 36 36 22**," he says.

To assist with the flood relief and recovery effort, you may make a tax deductible donation online at salvos.org.au or call **13 SALVOS (13 72 58)**.



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RED SHIELD APPEAL

We need you!

The Salvation Army needs volunteer collectors for the 2011 Red Shield Appeal Doorknock to be held on the weekend 28-29 May.

The Red Shield Appeal helps finance The Salvation Army's vast network of social and community services.

Please 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

NZ mining tragedy

Members of The Salvation Army at Greymouth, New Zealand, offered practical and pastoral support to their community after the death of 29 miners at the Pike River Mine in November 2010. The Salvation Army continues to pray for those affected.

Vic floods, WA fires

The Salvation Army has been assisting flood-affected communities in Victoria, providing bedding and other items, delivering supplies to the relief centre, and helping SES clear debris and water from roadways.

In addition, the Salvos have supported people affected by fires in WA by providing meals for around 200 fire fighters and essential items to 70 evacuees.



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

Fighting 'food insecurity'



ABOVE: ENVOY SIMON GREGORY (LEFT) AND VOLUNTEER, ALISON (RIGHT), HELP PROVIDE AFFORDABLE, FRESH FOOD.

"We heard stories – especially of local pensioners – just not eating properly, living on scraps. In general (this) is a very low income area (with) a very, very high unemployment rate and 40 to 50 per cent of the population lives in public housing. Many who live in the (public) bedsit units – very small one room units – are very isolated."

"There is no fresh food for sale, limited public transport and many here have no access to private transport."

ENVOY SIMON GREGORY

Local government research that showed a high level of 'food insecurity' in Warwick Farm (one of the most disadvantaged local government areas in Sydney's South West) led to the opening in July 2009 of *Food4Life* – a pilot program run by **The Salvation Army** in partnership with Sydney South West Area Health Service and the Department of Community Services.

According to Dr Greg Stewart of the Sydney South West Area Health Service, food insecurity means, at its simplest level, "not having access to appropriate nutritious and affordable food".

Food4Life offers a full bag of healthy groceries (valued at around \$40 to \$50) per family, per week, for a \$10 a time membership fee. The service also runs an extensive volunteer training program, and runs classes in anger management, computer use, and offers referrals for welfare support.

The success of the service has led to

funding for the establishment of 'Food4Life 2168' in the nearby suburb of Miller.

Food4Life manager Envoy Simon Gregory says pressures from rising rents and utilities are now starting to dramatically impact many working families.

He says: "(More and more people)... can't afford to pay for both their electricity and food. It's bad!"

Alison is a dedicated volunteer at *Food4Life* and at one stage was helped by The Salvation Army herself. She understands the terrible struggles faced by those trying to keep on top of bills and feed their families.

At one stage, her family of six, which includes twin teenagers studying for their HSC, had an impossible \$40 a week left to live on after paying the rent during a time when her self-employed partner had trouble finding contract work. There was absolutely nothing left for food.

Alison says: "The Salvos helped me out tremendously – I would have been lost without them."

"People are really doing it tough around here. Rents and utilities are pushing (many) people to the edge."

"I try everything to help them out. It stops that spiral and sometimes when you hear about people (thinking) of suicide and things like that ... it's really sad. (*Food4Life*) gives them hope and lets them know they're not alone. (I know as a volunteer) the help is going to people who really need it!" O

A remarkable journey

"There were a few people from the Department of Births, Deaths and Marriages and they were absolutely brilliant ... They said, 'you weren't born Alan William S...' I didn't know whether to laugh, whether to cry; I didn't know whether to stand up, sit down, or jump out the window. Thank goodness my wife was there ... I walked out and she looked at me and she said 'are you all right?' and I said, 'boy, have I got a story to tell you!'" ALAN

As a Work Health and Safety Officer for an Australian mining and construction company, Alan's job often takes him around the world. At age 56, with a loving wife, two sons and three grandsons, he was quite contented with his world and, as he says, definitely did not "fit the mould for the sort of person you might think would ever have need for the Salvos."

So when he and wife Carol decided to get their paperwork together after a serious health scare, Alan could not, in his wildest dreams, have imagined the twist his life was about to take.

Alan says: "I went to see my solicitor and armed myself with my birth certificate. My solicitor was sitting there, pondering it ... Finally he said, 'I think you ought to have this birth certificate checked out.'"

Alan's enquiries finally led him to a shocking discovery – he had been adopted out at six-weeks-old, and his mother and father were, in fact, not his birth parents.

He says: "I had a good childhood. I had a very good father / son relationship ... but I have always had this strange nagging feeling that something was missing."

After much soul-searching Alan and his family contacted **The Salvation**

Army's Family Tracing Service. It operates across Australia and is dedicated to locating missing relatives and reuniting families.

He says: "The Salvos were great at answering questions for me, guiding me, getting me to consider other questions I hadn't even thought of ... They encouraged me to write this personal letter to my (biological) mother ... I think I drafted up about four hundred drafts. Today Mum treasures it.

"Mum and Lyndal (Barker of The Salvation Army's Family Tracing Service) have also established a very, very good relationship ... Mum was going through a great deal because, all of a sudden, 57 years later, all this came to the surface.

"She was just abandoned (when she fell pregnant with me). Mum had nowhere – no money, no means, no nothing ... "

Alan first met his birth mother in The Salvation Army Family Tracing office in Brisbane and says: "We had a two-hour reunion and it was great! We fell into each other's arms and my lifetime nagging feeling of something being missing disappeared for good.

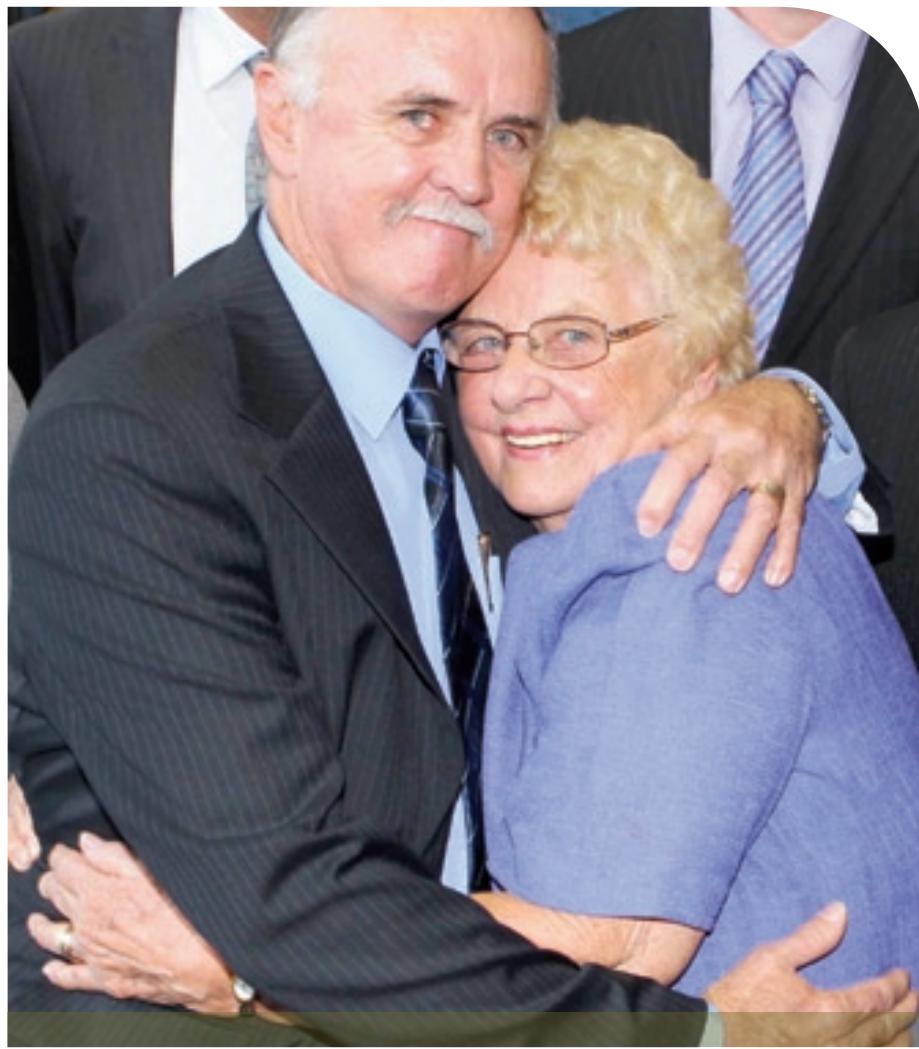
"Then on Easter Sunday 2007 at a family BBQ at my mother's place, I was introduced to six other brothers and sisters ... and my mother's partner, Kevin. He isn't my biological father, but I call him 'Dad' now (Alan's adoptive father has passed away)."

Alan says that blending his two families has "been a very big learning curve for everybody."

"It's not something you can just leap headlong into ... I try to make contact with them at least every two to three weeks, and we all get together at Christmas time and we all try and celebrate major birthdays.

"I had my 60th last year and most of my new family came to that. It was a good opportunity for them to meet a lot of my friends and find out ... the stories I didn't want them to find out," he laughs.

"It's been quite a journey. It's been great and thanks to Lyndal and The Salvation Army, it's had a very, very happy ending." O



ABOVE: ALAN IS REJOICING AFTER FINDING HIS BIOLOGICAL MOTHER AND FAMILY THROUGH THE SALVATION ARMY'S FAMILY TRACING SERVICE.

Circle of love

Salvation Army youth coordinator Claire Hill could see something really special in the tough-talking and defiant teenager who arrived at The Salvation Army ANYA camp. That girl is now a young woman, and is mentoring other girls and showing the same care and understanding Claire showed her.

"Stacey was definitely the wildest girl in the group!" Claire laughs. "The ANYA camp (which included outdoor activities, anger management, life skills and devotions) was for young people who'd had a difficult start to life. Some had come from unsettled, abusive or financially disadvantaged home situations, or some were just struggling massively at school."

Claire says: "When other kids would sit down quietly (Stacey) would ... go out of her way to disrupt the others. She would swear loudly. She was very likeable in spite of all that ... She went home pretty much as full on as when she'd arrived."

But something had changed in Stacey's thinking. She says: "I met Claire (and) there was just something about her ... I grew up in an environment (where) ... I was put down and told I was a brat my whole life and then suddenly there's this person showing care and love."

She says: "I look back now and that tough, lippy thing was such a defence mechanism. I (was) a really angry teenager – I could destroy people with my mouth (but) I was screaming out for love and acceptance."

Stacey's background included abuse,



ABOVE: CLAIRE HILL (LEFT) SUPPORTED STACEY (RIGHT) THROUGH HER TURBULENT TEENAGE YEARS.

family addiction and time in foster care.

"By year eight," she says, "I had already been suspended three times and was on the verge of expulsion. As a last resort, the school sent me to a 'Take 5' (alternative education) program, run by The Salvation Army." It was through this contact that Stacey was invited to attend camp.

After camp, Stacey began attending youth groups and church with Claire and another leader, Sonya. With a new-found faith in Jesus and mentors to support her, she returned to school and, despite many struggles, completed her education and made peace with her family. She says: "Life was still very difficult at home and school, but thanks to the amazing people God placed in my life, I came through those challenging years.

"When I did my Year 12 certificate, I had so many teachers say how much I'd changed and how they never

expected I'd make it that far."

Stacey is now studying Nursing. Since attending camp, she has worked for two years on a youth leadership team with The Salvation Army in her home suburb of Bidwill (in Sydney's west), mentoring other young women. She has also worked as a youth leader on an ANYA camp and firmly believes all teenagers need mentors to help them through the difficult years.

Stacey says: "Most teenagers relate to a mentor – it can change their life. They were the worst years of my life ... but they were also the years that I grew the most. Having someone healthy around who cared just changed everything. I (hate to) think of where I could have been now if Claire (and others) hadn't been there." *O*

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.**

- Worship and church programs
- Community services
- How I may make regular donations to the Red Shield Appeal
- Wills and bequests

My contact details

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Given name

Surname

Address

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State

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I would like to donate \$ _____ by

- Cheque/ money order payable to The Salvation Army
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Please be assured your details remain confidential.

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Letters & feedback welcome!