

On the Scene

WINTER 2006 NEWS & STORIES FROM THE SALVATION ARMY AUSTRALIA EASTERN TERRITORY

Children in crisis

Dealing with the hidden pain

Sophie* was a smiling, bubbly young girl, who loved life.

Suddenly, at age 11, everything changed. She began skipping school and, even worse, she began experimenting with drugs. The “high of choice” in her depressed neighbourhood was “chroming” (spraying paint into an empty bottle and sniffing the fumes).

Unbeknown to her parents, Sophie had been repeatedly sexually abused by a neighbour. Her life had turned into a living nightmare. Like so many children suffering from abuse, she kept silent, threatened with harm by her abuser if she spoke to her parents.

One of the only places Sophie felt safe was at The Beacon Youth Services (BYS), an initiative of **The Salvation Army** Townsville Faithworks Corps (church) in North Queensland.

Corps officer (church pastor) overseeing BYS, Captain Ross Holland, says: “When Sophie first came to BYS,



PHOTO: PENNY CLAY
ABOVE CAPTAINS ROSS (PICTURED) AND MELANIE-ANNE HOLLAND OF THE BEACON YOUTH SERVICES AIM TO PROVIDE A SAFE PLACE FOR KIDS.

nobody knew she was being sexually abused by someone living nearby. She thought there was something wrong with her and just wanted to dull the pain and the memory of her repeated sexual assault through drugs.

“She came to really trust us and eventually spoke to one of our regular volunteers. We approached the parents who had no idea. The whole family received counselling and the neighbour was charged.

“We helped get Sophie back to school, she’s put on the weight she had lost, she’s off chroming and the school cannot believe the change in her attitude,” says Ross.

Community-based Salvation Army initiatives like BYS provide safety, friendship, and a listening ear. Programs at BYS include a breakfast club and homework club to help stabilise young lives in an area of high disadvantage. More than that, BYS provides advocacy for young people who feel overwhelmed by problems in life.

Corps officer, Captain Melanie-Anne Holland says: “Our aim is to provide a safe place where kids can just be kids without being harassed. We believe it is important to create an atmosphere of respect where young people can gain a sense of dignity.”

BYS is soon to move into a new centre and the Hollands hope to employ a full-time youth worker. They also hope to eventually provide a street van to help protect marginalised children – some as young as seven years old – from roaming the streets at night.

“We aim to build relationships based on trust and if there are issues facing the kids, we want them to feel they can talk to us and we can help them find a solution,” says Melanie-Anne.

* THIS IS A TRUE STORY. NAME AND SOME DETAILS CHANGED TO PROTECT PRIVACY

** CHILD PICTURED NOT THE SUBJECT OF STORY

Every day, thousands of people carry heavy burdens that may not be obvious to their friends, neighbours and colleagues. They may face abuse in the home; they may be struggling to deal with grief, poverty or despair.

In this edition of *On the Scene*, we look at how The Salvation Army has been at work in our community, seeing past the brave faces to help people through the underlying crises.

PAGE 3 A pilot project uncovers the often-hidden

problem of domestic violence on Sydney’s affluent north shore.

PAGE 4 Port Arthur 10 years on: Salvationists Nesan and Adrian Kistan share how they dealt with their grief after the loss of their father at Port Arthur.

Red Shield Appeal

The Salvation Army aims to raise \$59 million nationally through the Red Shield Appeal. The appeal concludes on 30 June, with the Doorknock on 27-28 May. To donate to the appeal or volunteer as a Doorknock collector, simply call **13 SALVOS (13 72 58)** or visit www.salvos.org.au



THE SALVATION ARMY

RED SHIELD APPEAL

13 SALVOS (13 72 58)
& www.salvos.org.au

It's now easier to contact The Salvation Army via a new phone number, **13 SALVOS (13 72 58)**, and the re-launch of a new, more user-friendly version of our website, www.salvos.org.au. Call **13 SALVOS** for Red Shield Appeal donations and volunteering, Salvos Stores, Employment Plus and general enquiries.

Cyclone Larry Update

The Salvation Army has been heavily involved with relief efforts in the aftermath of Cyclone Larry in north Queensland. The Army's primary role in responding to the tragedy has been through the provision of food and catering services to emergency services personnel and displaced community members. Seventeen volunteers manning four Salvation Army Emergency Services trailers were the frontline of the response.

The Salvation Army also carried out a food drop to a property isolated by the Cyclone Larry-related flooding of Queensland's Gulf country. The drop was made by The Salvation Army's Outback Flying Service in early April.



Port Arthur ~ 10 year anniversary

"You just can't put into words the agony and despair we witnessed... I can't say I know what people are going through; I would never dare do that. I have never seen my wife or my best friend shot. I haven't seen my mother and father gunned down."

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL DON WOODLAND FOLLOWING THE PORT ARTHUR SHOOTING TRAGEDY ON 28 APRIL 1996



ABOVE LIEUTENANT-COLONEL DON WOODLAND OF THE SALVATION ARMY CONTINUES TO SUPPORT PEOPLE AFFECTED BY THE PORT ARTHUR TRAGEDY. HE IS ALSO CONCERNED FOR PEOPLE WHO NEVER RECEIVED THE SUPPORT THEY NEEDED.

Despite experience in hundreds of emergency and crisis situations, nothing could have prepared The Salvation Army's Lieutenant-Colonel Don Woodland for the immensity of the tragedy he encountered in Port Arthur, Tasmania, 10 years ago.

A veteran chaplain of the Vietnam War, now retired, Don headed The Salvation Army Trauma Management Team that rushed to the site in response to the Port Arthur shootings. Ten years on, one of his greatest concerns is for the hidden grief so many people carried back into society after Port Arthur.

"There were over 550 people at the Port Arthur site on the day of the shooting. By midday the next day, 90% of them had left the area," explains Don. Don believes many of these people would have been severely traumatised and yet may not have ever received any support.

Don's team spent days supporting 18 staff members and grieving families and friends. Many are still in contact with him today. Don says: "When I see their ongoing pain, I cannot imagine the problems faced by people who had no support. Time doesn't help, time doesn't make you forget – that's a fallacy.

Every time you talk to these people, it's like it happened yesterday." *O*

"How to keep living when your world falls apart" – Read about how Salvationists Nesan and Adrian Kistan, who lost their father in the Port Arthur shooting tragedy, have coped through the past 10 years. **SEE PAGE 4**

Media coverage around the anniversary of the Port Arthur tragedy may bring back painful memories or feelings of anxiety for some people. You may wish to make an appointment to talk to someone at The Salvation Army Counselling Service:

- Sydney (02) 9743 2831
- Penrith & Campbelltown (02) 4731 1554
- Canberra & Tuggeranong (02) 6248 5504
- Brisbane & Brisbane North (07) 3349 5046

You can also call Salvo Care Line 24 hours on 1300 36 36 22.

The hidden suffering ~ behind closed doors

A new report released by The Salvation Army highlights a steady increase in domestic violence against women in higher socio-economic families on Sydney's North Shore. With one in four women said to be affected by some form of domestic violence, the report indicates the full extent of violence in affluent families is hugely underestimated.



PHOTO: PAT DALEY

LEFT "SUPPORT AGENCIES CANNOT COPE WITH THE INCREASING DEMAND FROM WOMEN SUFFERING ABUSE FROM THEIR PARTNERS," SAYS AMY M. DAVID (PICTURED), PROJECT COORDINATOR FOR NORTHSIDE WOMEN'S SERVICES.



The report has been prepared by the Northside Women's Services, which is a new service of **The Salvation Army**. It records that there are unique factors related to domestic violence in the northern suburbs of Sydney – including the stigma attached to the victims and financial dependence on partners.

Additionally, the report highlights the fact that women in affluent areas find it difficult to take the initial steps to free themselves from the violence they are experiencing. This is reinforced by statistics that indicate up to 70% of North Shore women withdraw from taking out an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO) against their partner, some of the highest case withdrawal rates in NSW.

Part of the problem, the report's author and Northside Project Coordinator Amy M. David said today, is that "women in higher socio-economic communities fear they will not be believed, because of the

perception that violence doesn't occur in more affluent households.

"The stigma around domestic violence is similar across the board, however, it seems that more affluent women are looked at differently. They get stigmatised by the community because of the perception that they've got everything and should be happy," she says.

She says that although many people wonder why an abused woman doesn't just leave, it is rarely that easy. There are a number of factors including worry for the children, social stigma, and most commonly total lack of confidence in the woman.

Amy says: "Women are being told they can't live without their husband, that they're worth nothing, that no-one else would ever want them, they're terrible. Once their confidence has gone, they become totally vulnerable.

"Also, domestic violence becomes very normal for them. They learn to cope. So

something out of that abnormal norm often has to happen for them to decide to get out. For example if her partner is physically violent, but he's never been sexually violent, he might rape her, or he might hit the children for the first time, before she fully realises the extent of the situation."

Amy explains that physical violence is not the only type of abuse women endure; emotional, financial and social abuse is also prominent. "I've seen cases where a husband would leave for work in the morning, deadlock his wife into the house and turn off the phone for the day. It is common to see people actively working to separate their partners from all family and friends," she says.

The report details the general lack of funding and support available to victims of domestic violence on the North Shore. "Support agencies cannot cope with the increasing demand from women suffering abuse from their partners," says Amy.

The Northside Women's Services (NWS) began as a two-year pilot project in 2003, funded by a sole benefactor. Prior to the establishment of NWS, women's services in Sydney's north provided for women with children only. NWS caters for all women over 18, and provides advice and guidance, as well as greater options with suitable emergency accommodation than were previously available.

However, it is clear from the report that greater funding is needed to prevent ongoing problems for these families. Major Colin Haggart oversees The Salvation Army's crisis accommodation services in the Sydney area. He emphasised the importance of supporting victims of domestic violence, saying that, "There is an undisputed link between domestic violence and homelessness – nearly every case of homelessness is associated with some form of domestic violence." *o*

Women experiencing domestic violence are urged to call the police and report any recent incidents. Information and advice is available by calling the 24 hour Domestic Violence Crisis Line on 1800 65 64 63, Northside Women's Services during business hours on (02) 9411 7728, or Salvo Care Line on 1300 36 36 22.

How to keep living when your world falls apart



PHOTO: ADAM HOLLINGSWORTH

Salvationists* Nesan and Adrian Kistan were 23 and 20 when they lost their father in the Port Arthur shooting tragedy 10 years ago. In one moment, everything in their once stable lives was blown apart, their world forever changed.

LEFT ADRIAN KISTAN (L), PICTURED WITH NESAN: "WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS AND WE ARE OVERCOMERS."

Their parents Tony and Sarah had been visiting friends in Tasmania and had travelled to Port Arthur for the day. Sitting near the entrance to the Broad Arrow Cafe, Tony saw the first waitress shot. He pushed his wife out of the door, and then doubled back to try to disarm the gunman.

Tony was shot and fatally wounded. His final words to his wife were, "Don't worry, I'm going to be with the Lord."

How does any family begin to cope with such a tragedy? How do they begin to make sense of the numbness, the anger and grief?

Nesan Kistan who, together with his wife, now co-pastors a **Salvation Army** Corps (church) at Auburn in Sydney's west, says the pain of losing his father was "unbelievable; it was beyond description. That loss is the hardest, most painful thing I have ever had to endure..."

Nesan and his brother Adrian, who also works for The Salvation Army, agree that you never really deal with tragedy, it is just something you can learn to live through. They both attribute their strength to God's healing power, their family upbringing, Salvation Army counselling and, very importantly, to a fiercely loving

and supportive church community.

Nesan says that at one stage his mother became incredibly bitter and angry at God.

He explains: "It took a long time and a lot of praying. We prayed for weeks, months. It wasn't until she returned to Port Arthur for the first anniversary... while she was in her hotel room one night (God) changed the face of Martin Bryant (the convicted gunman) into one of her own sons in her mind. That's when the Spirit of God said to her, 'If it was one of your children, would you forgive him?' Now she has this incredible message of God's love and forgiveness."

Nesan says: "Even now in situations, such as working with refugees in Auburn, some of their stories trigger pain in me when I hear of some of their loved ones having been murdered and killed and mutilated.

"This event has changed my whole mindset... I now believe that the only meaning in life is bringing people into a relationship with God... that the most important thing in life is God, because that's the only place we have any real future."

Adrian Kistan says: "All through the past 10 years, I've thought about my dad's death.

"When I graduated from university, when I had my 21st birthday, when we got married, had our firstborn (we're expecting our second child)... and Dad wasn't there. We've made some big decisions - we're moving out to Moree to work among Indigenous communities - and I often think, 'I wonder what Dad would think about this?'

"But what tends to happen now is my memories are no longer surrounded by sadness, they are happy memories. I now get to actually control when those memories come into my mind, rather than having them just hit me when I least expect it. I focus on the positives and the good times.

"I hold God to his word, when he says we are more than conquerors and we are overcomers.

"We're not called to be victims and wallow in self pity. Those promises become real when we step out in faith and live them out. I've worked on doing that in my life. That has strengthened me and given me a greater urgency in realising, 'Hey, life can just come and go so quickly'." *O*

* SALVATIONISTS ARE SALVATION ARMY CHURCH MEMBERS.



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!

