



Alarming rise in homeless single, older women

“They will all tell you stories of having tough times, but they never, ever approached any type of charity. There can be a great sense of shame, but we say to them ‘there’s no shame and we are here to work with you and help you back on your feet.’” – Capt Sandra Edge

The rate of homeless older single women is steadily increasing, according to Upper Blue Mountains Salvation Army officer Captain Sandra Edge, who says women aged up to the age of 70 are living in their cars, or any temporary accommodation they can find.

“Many have been living in cities in private rentals and their partner may have passed away, or there has been separation or divorce. Often there is not enough superannuation and the pension doesn’t fully pay for their rent, let alone any living expenses,” Sandra says.

According to Sandra, many have been housewives or mothers and don’t have significant employment history.

This trend has also been noted in a number of recent studies, including a joint report between The Salvation Army Australian Southern Territory and Swinburne University* which states: “Single, older women in Australia have emerged as a group vulnerable to housing insecurity and as being in danger of homelessness in their old age.”



SHARON PATTERSON

THE SALVOS’ SANDRA EDGE (LEFT) SAYS INCREASING NUMBERS OF OLDER WOMEN ARE FACING HOMELESSNESS.

Searching for stability

Sandra says: “Many drive out of Sydney to areas nearby such as the Blue Mountains looking for safe, cheap accommodation, but then find increased demand has pushed up costs and decreased housing availability.

“If they want to stay within the local area, we use all the resources available in conjunction with other local agencies to help stabilise them,” she says.

“The service recently helped a

homeless woman in her 70s find medium-term accommodation in a tourist hostel, and another grandmother who lost her home at 60, into medium-term emergency accommodation.

“They’ve been living and travelling around in their cars, almost in shock at the situation they have found themselves in,” Sandra says.

*“No Home at the end of the Road?” 2011 Dr Andrea Sharam.

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Bike ride educates students about addictions

Twelve participants from The Salvation Army's Dooralong Transformation Centre have taken a stance against drugs and alcohol on this year's rode2recovery bike ride. Facing wild temperatures ranging from 41 degrees right down to 2 degrees, the bike ride started in Bourke and finished at the Dooralong Transformation Centre.

A million thanks to no-interest loans

A Salvos no-interest loan scheme (NILS) has given out \$1 million to disadvantaged Australians for essential goods and services since it began over two years ago. The small-scale NILS loans are for those who are unable to access affordable finance. People can borrow up to \$1500, with no interest or fees charged, and the option to pay the loan off over 18 months.

Help still needed 12 months after 'Oswald'

A year after Bundaberg was hit with major floods caused by ex-tropical cyclone Oswald, many families still have no means of repairing their flood and storm-damaged homes. The Community Rebuild Project, coordinated by The Salvation Army in partnership with the combined churches of Bundaberg, is continuing to help those in need.

All funds raised by The Salvation Army will only be used to support the operation of our vital social welfare programs.

Supporter story Majors Owen and Pam Pattison

'All service is beautiful'

"We are pensioners, which gives us tremendous freedom to answer a call for service – at scenes of cyclones such as 'Larry' in the Atherton Tablelands, and through fires and floods." – Owen Pattison.

To date, between spending time with children and grandchildren, **Salvation Army** Major Owen Pattison, with his wife Captain Pam Pattison both aged in their 70s, have served in 15 different appointments (a number of them long-term) since their 'retirement', including service in a range of front-line disaster zones.

Their only true attempt at retirement lasted for a few "glorious summer's days" in 2009, according to Owen, in what was the start of what was to be a holiday around half of Australia.

That night in 2009, when the couple turned on the news, they were stunned by reports of the 'Black Saturday' bushfires unfolding in Victoria, so Owen and Pam

immediately abandoned their holiday plans, headed for Victoria and worked tirelessly for 16 weeks in the fire zone.

In 2003, following floods in Bundaberg, the couple served in an emergency volunteer role, then ran the local Corps (church) while officers took leave. They say the resilience of the Bundaberg flood survivors inspires them.

Owen says: "After the floods, one couple was living in their garage. There was mud everywhere. The husband just out of hospital and the wife was in a borrowed wheelchair trying to make the most of a very difficult situation.

"Many would present a very brave face, but when we offered help, the tears would begin to flow freely."

Pam adds: "We truly feel privileged to serve our precious Lord and Saviour 'All service is beautiful' was a favourite saying of my mother, and serving truly is beautiful." *o*



THE PATTISONS HAVE CONTINUED TO SERVE SELFLESSLY SINCE THEIR 'RETIREMENT'.

We would love to hear why you support The Salvation Army. Tell us what motivates you to give and you may feature in our next edition of *On the Scene* Email generosity@ae.salvationarmy.org

The fruit of faithfulness



SHARON PATTERSON

JASON WITH THE SALVATION ARMY'S MAJOR ROBBIN MOULDS AM (LEFT) AND CAPTAIN KAREN FLEMMING.

“There was a strong sense of fear, even just stepping outside of your house. Then Craig and Danni arrived and changed my life and the lives of so many others.” – Jason

Jason and his family lived in a housing estate plagued by drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, crime, youth gangs and vandalism.

Then, almost 14 years ago, at the request of local area commander of police, **The Salvation Army's** Craig and Danni Stephens and family moved into the Ivanhoe Estate, near Ryde (Sydney), to work and live in their newly established three bedroom rented ‘No 47 Community House’. Soon children and young people from the area began attending Salvation Army camps, school study sessions, sporting groups, mentoring and church activities.

Challenges to change

Craig, who won 2008 Ryde Citizen of the year for his outstanding work in the area, says of early days in the estate: “The Department of Housing originally gave us 12 months to turn things around or else they planned to

bulldoze the entire estate.

There had been lots of gang activities, assaults, malicious damage, threatening behaviour, lots of graffiti and cars being torched. Youth gangs would barricade the streets so that the police couldn't access the place.”

Jason says that Craig and Danni's faithfulness did indeed bring about “remarkable” transformation, with many finding “deep faith and transformation through Jesus” with others simply feeling safer and significantly more connected with their community.

Jason, who lived in the area from the age of 10 to 17, says while benefitting from a range of programs, the cricket group that Craig started was his favourite.

In 2007, Jason received a Sports Achievement Award at the Housing NSW Youth Achievement Awards. He later completed a Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Drugs work and then began working at The Salvation Army's OASIS Youth Support Network.

Passion to serve

In 2012, Jason was awarded the

prestigious City of Sydney's Youth Worker of the Year.

He has gone on to run The Salvation Army's Sports Impact Leadership program and, in 2014, is co-ordinating youth programs for the Salvos Youth Foundation to pinpoint areas of need and possible initiatives to help meet young people's needs throughout NSW, ACT and QLD.

Passionate about investing positively into young lives himself, Jason says the impact of Craig and Danni's care will always stay with him.

He says: “When they came around and gave us presents and food to have a decent Christmas, or invited us for Christmas lunch, including us as a part of their family, or helped us with homework, encouraged our faith – those memories stay in your mind forever and become part of your life forever.

“And it's not just my story,” Jason says, “so many people I grew up with will never forget the impact on their lives!”

*Craig and Danni now run The Salvation Army's Dooralong Transformation Centre. They handed over the Community House to The Salvation Army's Nathan and Karen Moulds in early 2013.

A life filled with care



SHARON PATTERSON

JAYNE WILSON (RIGHT) CONTINUED TO LOVINGLY SERVE OTHERS THROUGHOUT HER OWN HEALTH CRISIS.

A lonely and distressed woman sat on a cliff top contemplating ending her life. In her desperation, the woman reached for her mobile phone and pressed in a number she had been given to call if life got too tough.

Ten or so kilometres away, Jayne Wilson, mother of seven and head of **The Salvation Army's** First Floor Program (Wollongong, NSW) was fighting for her own life, preparing to receive a chemotherapy injection.

As a nurse inserted a needle into her arm, Jayne's mobile rang.

The caller was Francesca (not her real name), the woman on the cliff.

Francesca had lost hope after three years of intense stress after her 17-year relationship ended acrimoniously and she had moved to Wollongong for work.

She says: "I was missing my child, I couldn't eat, I lost energy, I had headaches and pain ... I was taking three types of antidepressants and none of them were working.

"I don't know what made me make the call to Jayne," Francesca says.

A cry for help

"Somebody had given me her number. I didn't know she was in hospital. I was screaming. She was trying to calm me."

Francesca says she cannot remember much of that initial conversation, but explains: "the thing I remember the most is that she said she promised that I would receive the full backing and services of The Salvation Army if I came down from the mountain."

Francesca immediately met the support personnel Jayne organised and she and Francesca then also met a number of times.

Francesca has since stopped taking antidepressants. She is rebuilding her life with support and says she only discovered later that first day that Jayne was in hospital undergoing cancer treatment.

"Jayne saved my life. There is no doubt about that," Francesca says. "She was there for me, even though she had every reason to pass on my call because of her own circumstances."

For more than 15 years, Jayne had overseen the establishment and then development of the First Floor Program.

Essential services founder

The service offers support for individuals and their loved ones impacted by addiction &/or mental health issues, plus a range of other services. Programs developed by the centre are used nationally and internationally.

Jayne also served as chaplain to the Lake Illawarra Command of NSW Police, helped establish a support program for emergency services personnel and played a key role in a number of pilot programs with agencies including the Department of Corrective Services.

Jayne said she was humbled by the opportunities she had to help others and praised the dedication and skills of the First Floor staff.

Through her encounter with Francesca, at a time she questioned if she could be any more use to God, Jayne said: "I learned even more about the graciousness of God!" 

One week before Christmas, Jayne Wilson returned to Wollongong Hospital. She passed away into God's loving arms on Christmas Day. *By Bill Simpson.
For more information or to support First Floor phone (02) 4229 1079.

