



A better life starts here

South Auckland's Life Skills Programme, sponsored by AA Life, helps mothers and their children escape poverty

Limited resources mean providing enough programmes and specialist staff to help clients move from dire poverty to self-reliance is an ever-present challenge.

That's why The Salvation Army in South Auckland is fortunate to have the backing of AA Life to continue its Life Skills Programme. The programme helps single mothers who are isolated from their families and communities, and who are finding it hard to cope with the 24/7 struggle of managing a family with limited funds and no support.

Programme facilitator Janice Holdaway says a large proportion of course participants have faced domestic violence, have had minimal education and all are under massive financial pressure. Some have developed addictions after turning to alcohol or drugs as a relief from the constant

pressures of raising children alone and the material hardship of their situation.

The eight-week course includes units on cooking and nutrition, budgeting, energy conservation, and classes on self-esteem, goal setting, planning and self-awareness. Their children are cared for at an on-site crèche during classes.

Participants are referred from the courts and other agencies, as well as from Salvation Army budget advisers and social workers, employment training tutors and addiction treatment services.

'The common denominator is that all women on the programme have a self-esteem which is almost non-existent, so our primary aim is to show them that they are valuable human beings and there are ways and means to lift themselves and their children from the situations they're in—that there is another way of life,' Janice says.

And the programme works. One former South Auckland student, Ayesha, moved from the Life Skills Programme into a course with The Salvation Army's

Salvation Army staff member Raewyn with Life Skills Programme participant Keripearie

employment training arm, Employment Plus, which helped her secure a full-time clerical position. The single mother of three, who left school dreaming of becoming a nurse is now in the final year of a Bachelor of Nursing.

'There were once times when I was going without food to keep the kids fed, and no women wants that kind of life for their children,' Ayesha says. 'It really is hard out there, especially for people who don't know what options are available.'

Upon completing the Life Skills Programme, women receive support for 12 months to ensure the positive changes they have made become life-long habits. They are also referred to other Salvation Army services where necessary.

AA Life has been a keen supporter of The Salvation Army for a number of years. They saw the South Auckland Life Skills Programme as a way to further that support, recognising the ability of the programme to give participants the skills they need to make positive and dramatic changes to their lives.

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Business community invaluable

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Business community invaluable to Sallies' welfare work

In 2011, corporate New Zealand showed its compassion and a tremendous capacity to help those in dire need

Following the Canterbury quakes, the business community rapidly rallied to help The Salvation Army expand its provision of food, clothing, furniture, vouchers and other support to those in greatest need. It also provided backing for the ongoing work of The Salvation Army's psychosocial teams, school programmes and respite holidays for stressed and exhausted Cantabrians.

The list of companies that put their shoulders behind The Salvation Army's work, providing funds, goods and expertise, is too long to list on this page. Our clients are immensely grateful for such support.

The Salvation Army stands by its long-term commitment of social and financial support to Christchurch people affected by the earthquakes. This year, demand for our services is expected to rise significantly as residents' insurance and other accommodation subsidies expire and personal savings run out, placing further stresses on households

already dealing with uncertainty.

In the wake of the 2008 recession, demand on Salvation Army services is pushing our personnel and resources to their limits. Excluding food parcel distribution in Christchurch since the quake, The Army has seen a 34 per cent increase in emergency food aid distributed since 2008. Last year 66,038 food parcels were distributed to 39,300 families and individuals.

Behind the food banks, where social workers, budget advisers and counsellors help unravel the often intricate and time-consuming problems underpinning families' poverty, demand is insatiable.

Social work services have leapt 120 per cent in the three years to the end of 2011 and budgeting 52 per cent.

We have been fortunate to have the backing of Rabobank for our budgeting services, AA Life sponsoring a Life Skills Programme in South Auckland and many other companies supporting our food banks. But while The Salvation Army will not turn people away, the after-effects of the recession and the Christchurch earthquakes have meant we are facing increasing challenges to provide services at the current levels.

While the present economic environment continues to cause complications for New Zealand companies, The Salvation Army hopes that the business community will again walk with the Army as it cares for, and transforms the lives of, New Zealanders who are struggling to provide even the bare necessities for their families.

**Commissioner
Don Bell
Territorial
Commander**



Salvation Army community support for the 12 months ending Dec 2011:

66,038 Food parcels distributed

39,296 Families receiving emergency food aid

67% Increase in social work services provided

33% Increase in budget advice services

Salvation Army delivers State of the Nation report

The fifth State of the Nation report, *The Growing Divide*, was launched on Friday 17 February to widespread media coverage and packed-out events in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Dunedin. The report highlights the 'deep chasm of difference between the poor, and their middle class cousins,' said Major Campbell Roberts, director of the Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit, which produced the report.

'New Zealand has always had a divide, but we are now seeing a deepening of this divide for a group of New Zealanders who are getting poorer and poorer, more disenfranchised and more marginalised.' He called New Zealand's failure to produce a plan against poverty 'a national disgrace'. 'We have a roading plan—where is the deliverable plan for defeating poverty? Other countries have one. It can be done,' he challenged.

Alan Johnson, author of *The Growing Divide* and senior policy advisor for the unit, agreed that the New Zealand story

needs to be told from the other side of the divide—this is what State of the Nation aims to do: 'What happened to the story that economic growth will be the panacea to social need? There is no reason to believe that our longer-term poverty rates will change, without some fundamental change in the way our resources are shared,' he said.

Key findings in the report include:

Child poverty: 200,000 children are living below the threshold of poverty, or 20 per cent of all New Zealand children.

Crime and punishment: Of 9000 prisoners released last year, it is expected that 3500 will be back in prison within two years. 'There is talk about rehabilitation and re-integration but budgets don't change,' said Mr Johnson.

Social hazards: Availability of alcohol has reached a 20 year high. 'That's equivalent to 20 million more Woodies available,' said Mr Johnson—of the Woodstock drink, highly popular with young people.

Young people: While over-65s in employment have risen by around 40,000, this has been mirrored by 15–19 year olds, whose employment rates have dropped by around 40,000. 'The untold story is that young people are bearing the brunt of the recession.'

To read *The Growing Divide*, go to www.salvationarmy.org.nz/socialpolicy



Alan Johnson presents his findings at the Wellington launch event



Corporate partnership works to provide quake relief

Thanks to a partnership with Westpac Bank, Salvation Army Care Vans provide crucial support for Canterbury people in crisis

Since September 2010, the devastating earthquakes and ongoing aftershocks have taken a heavy toll on Christchurch families, leaving many emotionally drained and some exhibiting symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Shortly after the first quake, The Salvation Army sent out dozens of teams of psychosocial workers to affected neighbourhoods to assess the material and emotional needs of residents.

This work has continued unabated and was given new impetus through Westpac Bank raising and donating funds to purchase three vans to help Salvation Army staff personnel increase their coverage of quake-affected communities.

The Community Care Van teams visit all affected neighbourhoods, schools, council flats, Red Zone areas and outlying suburbs. They participate in local events, as well as providing ongoing support for government agency teams providing information door-to-door.

The teams coordinate with Salvation Army centres for the provision of goods and food, facilitate access to Salvation Army social workers, counsellors, budget advisors and other staff, and refer residents to other agencies and services.

Community Care Team Coordinator Gillie Blacklee says the vehicles have proven invaluable in increasing her teams' mobility and also providing mobile offices to process and coordinate assistance for residents.

'The vans have also been important in reassuring residents that they haven't been abandoned and that support is there when they need it,' she says.

Salvation Army Earthquake Response Manager Bruce Coffey says the need for the service is likely to rise this year as the 12-month insurance cover for accommodation assistance expires for many families. His staff have also noted a rise in the number of isolated elderly people overwhelmed by the stresses of negotiating insurance claims and repairs, exacerbated by the ongoing aftershocks.

'The reality is that the people we see—traumatised children, stressed parents, those made redundant—have experienced great loss and have been living with high-tension for well over a year now,' he says.

Westpac recently funded the development of a website where Cantabrians can access information about the vans, a schedule of locations they will visit and contact details. Go to www.salliescarevans.org.nz

Post-quake work to date

Since the September earthquake, The Salvation Army has spent around \$8 million on welfare support, including food, clothing and furniture, vouchers and \$500 Care Cards.

Respite holidays were provided to families and individuals needing to get out the region for a break.

When domestic water and sewage infrastructure was being repaired, The Salvation Army provided \$1 million to fund 20,900 chemical toilets and contributed three custom-designed mobile shower units comprising 21 shower and changing cubicles.

In the aftermath of the February quake, 1200 Salvation Army personnel, from as

far away as Australia, descended on the region to join psychosocial teams visiting more than 100,000 affected households. The Salvation Army served more than 75,000 meals to displaced residents and emergency service workers.

The Army also supports 15 schools in the severely damaged eastern suburbs.

Budgeting services critical to alleviating poverty

Corporate support for Salvation Army budgeting services is transforming the lives of thousands of families

Through the generous and ongoing support of Rabobank, The Salvation Army has expanded its budgeting services, including extending services to new parts of rural and urban New Zealand.

Salvation Army budget advisers were able to provide around 10,000 budgeting sessions to clients in 2011. The volume of services provided during the year increased by 33 per cent.

Corporate support for intensive services, such as budgeting and life skills programmes, has been crucial in helping raise more families out of poverty, Secretary for Social Services Major Pam Waugh says. 'Without this support, we would see a higher degree of homelessness through foreclosures and evictions and more bankruptcies, with all the attendant misery.'

Since the recession of 2008, clients have been presenting with increasingly complex problems, including high levels of debt as redundancies and reduced working hours bite into household budgets. For the first time, large numbers of working families have come to The Salvation Army for support as financial obligations outstrip their incomes.

Budget advisers carefully examine their clients' financial situations, help them develop a strategy to pay off debt and minimise costs, and can advocate for them when negotiating with creditors, banks or government agencies. They work closely with Salvation Army social



workers, counsellors and food banks to relieve the often crushing pressures on clients. The process has become more complex and time consuming but the results can be dramatic.

Hokianga resident Maide moved to Whangarei after her 13-year-old son was expelled from school. The plan was to stay in Whangarei for a year to enable her son to re-enter the education system. Her greatest fear was that he would give up on his education and end up in the courts.

But paying a mortgage on her Hokianga home and rent in Whangarei left her with little disposable income, pushing her further into the red. 'But to me, this is more about his education than my life. I don't want him to be a statistic in the jails, and that is the reason I made

the move to come down,' Maide says.

Maide and The Salvation Army budget adviser reviewed all Maide's costs and income and mapped out a strategy.

Maide says some of the spending choices she had to make were tough, but her household budget is now manageable—sufficient to deal with her debt and overheads. With her son flourishing in his new school environment, Maide expects to return to Hokianga next year with the continued support of The Salvation Army.

'I can't explain it, actually it is just too much,' she says. 'Every time I came into The Salvation Army, the budgeter just treated me as a person—and to me that meant so much. They have just been there all the time for me.'

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To find out how your workplace can get further involved in supporting our work in the community, please contact the **Public Relations Department: (04) 382 0744, pr@nzf.salvationarmy.org**, or visit our '**Corporate Partnerships**' page at salvationarmy.org.nz

Giving back

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