

Together

AUTUMN 2023

YOUR SUPPORT IN ACTION



Te Ope Whakaora



▲ SANDRA

A Place to Belong for Sandra's Family

Sandra volunteers her time in her local centre to help those who may feel lost and directionless in their family unit, like she once felt before walking into a Salvation Army foodbank.

I'm married to Shane and the mother of six children. I had my first child at the age of 18, but it didn't stop my lifestyle of drinking and partying. When my baby was six months old, my relationship with his father broke down and that's when it hit me hard. I remember thinking 'I'm a mum. I've got to really step up now because I could have lost my child.' At the age of 20, that's when I met Shane. I then had another three children which made us a very busy family of four.

I became pregnant with twins, and I thought, 'how will we cope? How will we manage with another?' It was a very traumatic time, and we weren't even coping

with the kids we had. We were faced with an army of mouths to feed which made things harder. Shane got laid off his job at that time too so that put the stress at pretty high levels and we were wondering where we could turn.

Adding to this stress, our new-born twins ended up in intensive care in hospital. It was then that we started to lose parental control over our older children. We weren't coping, so how could they cope? We had no purpose in life. It was like we had drifted off track. We lost our rental home, and at one point we were even camping in my mother's lounge, our family of six, marae style.

We ended up in emergency housing in Palmerston North. I felt like I was at my wit's end; scared and alone. Desperate for some food relief, we went to The Salvation Army Centre in Palmerston North. We were greeted by a lovely couple of people down in the foodbank. They were such loving and caring people who touched our

Continued over page ►



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hearts and brought us to tears of gratitude. The support only grew from there, and as a rapid result of that first meeting in the foodbank we were given help with budgeting and counselling.

Little things in our life began to fall into place, and we saw changes in our kids and changes in me and my husband. Shane and I went on to become volunteers at the foodbank. The help we received gave us a new feeling of security. We felt loved and we felt the companionship of the wonderful people there that showed us love and care. It's real love.

'I felt the love for my family coming back. Shane and I were loving each other again and my kids started listening and I just felt it in them too, the love coming back.'

We just felt like we were getting our kids back together as a family and we were better equipped to be parents. If it wasn't for walking in the door that day, we wouldn't be a family today. It gave us a new direction in our lives, a new purpose. I still volunteer to this day at the centre, and I love it! I wouldn't have it any other way.

Sandra's family now feel they have been given a new direction in life after being helped by the Community Ministries teams they have encountered. This kind of transformation is empowered by the generosity of people like you.

PART OF THE SOLUTION

Matt Turner grew up in England, where his father was a private school headmaster, and the family often lived in school houses in beautiful settings. One was even on the grounds of a former stately home!

On retiring from schoolmastering, his father was ordained in the Anglican Church, and served as curate of three picturesque Cotswold village churches. An ideal upbringing in many circumstances.

Matt now lives in Masterton with his wife, the youngest of his three children, two aging cats and a very energetic two-year-old Huntaway.

Over the 18 years that Matt has lived in New Zealand, he has seen the other side of family life, and even in his own extended family he has seen how a change in circumstances can so easily tip people from secure to vulnerable in a short space of time.

Matt joined the True Heroes programme two years ago. As a volunteer for the community arts programme in Masterton, a busy dad, an artist and a book editor, he's short on time. 'Starting up a set-and-forget plan with the Sallies means that I can support the amazing work that they do, even if I can't help directly myself.'

Like many of us, Matt remembers The Salvation Army mostly from the bands that he would see each Christmas, and he has been amazed to find out more about their work in the informative newsletters that he receives twice a year.

'I love receiving the newsletters. I rang early on when I signed up, and was told that The Salvation Army can keep costs very low, and most of the donations received go exactly where they are needed. This is really reassuring. I get to keep in touch with the different projects around the country, and meet the people that I am helping.'



▲ MATT WITH HATTIE THE DOG

The True Heroes programme funds the vital wraparound services that provide a holistic solution to those who find themselves in vulnerable circumstances. A recurring plan, which acts very much like a magazine subscription, means that Matt can budget for his own family, as he can donate an affordable amount each month and he knows that the costs of a recurring giving plan are minimal.

True Heroes programme advisor Gabrielle says, 'It's great having people like Matt on board. As a busy working dad, this type of giving is so easy for him to manage.'

'Best looks different, depending on your circumstances,' says Matt, 'and as a parent I wish all children could have an ideal environment to grow up in. You just never know when you might need extra support. I'd encourage everyone to set up a plan; it feels great to be part of the solution.'

To become a True Hero like Matt, contact Gabrielle on 021 352 742, or email gabrielle.martell-turner@salvationarmy.org.nz

From Our Territorial Commander

Kia ora and welcome to our first *Together* newsletter for 2023.

Our thoughts and prayers are with all those affected by Cyclone Gabrielle, some of whom were already struggling to recover from previous severe rain and floods.

I thank you for your support, which helps The Salvation Army to provide both relief to communities recovering from emergency situations and longer-term social and emotional assistance where it is needed most.

In addition, the ongoing high cost of living continues to leave many families struggling to get by, adding to the impacts of recent weather disasters.

In this issue, you will read about a variety of ways in which you are supporting children, youth, and families to have the best outcomes through programmes like Salvation Army run Early Childhood Education Centres, SPACE and Aspire, all of which can offer a safe environment for parents and children who may be feeling lost, isolated, unsure and anxious.

You will also hear from Matt Turner, a member of our True Heroes programme, as he explains why he likes this way of supporting The Salvation Army's vital wraparound services: 'It feels great to be part of the solution' says Matt.

Blessings for your support.



**Mark Campbell
(Commissioner)**

Territorial Commander
The Salvation Army New
Zealand, Fiji, Tonga &
Samoa Territory



Aspire Youth— Connecting the Dots

For at-risk rangatahi (young people), the Aspire programme can make a huge difference in creating positive connections and giving hope for the future.

Aspire is a 10 month programme for 11–16-year-olds that includes weekly group work, adventure experiences and family support. There is a strong emphasis on self-reflection and recognition.

The programme is targeted at youth who may be experiencing social isolation or the effects of relationship breakdown or poverty. The programme is especially for youth who may be experiencing behavioural challenges.

Aspire is made possible by the generosity of The Warehouse Group, who have now provided over \$1 million to support the programme since its inception.

Isabel, one of our Youth and Community Engagement Coordinators, speaks of the changes that she has noticed in the youth she works with thanks to the Aspire programme:

'I have seen rangatahi re-engage and stay with mainstream education where they were on the verge of dropping out. I have seen rangatahi make positive decisions regarding their friendships and relationships. I have seen rangatahi push their comfort zones, set goals and smash them. I have seen rangatahi who are the first



in their families to finish college, to go to university and to maintain a job while studying.'

To show you the true impact that your donations have on the vulnerable young people in our communities, see the responses below from when Aspire youth were asked the question 'what is Aspire?'

'Aspire is connecting with people and korero [talking]'

'Aspire is a circle of courage'

'Aspire is connecting the dots'

'Aspire is feeling heard'

'Aspire is time to reflect present-self back to future-self'

'Aspire is becoming better, becoming stronger and discovering I am more than I thought I could be'

'Aspire is feeling like a superhero'

'Aspire is a compass pointing me home'

Our sincerest thanks to The Warehouse Group and supporters like you for making the Aspire programme possible and available to help young people find a new direction in life.



Teddy's Settling In

Our country's children are our future, and that's why early childhood care and education is so vital in the formation of our future citizens.

This can go fairly smoothly in many instances. But for children and their families with cultural and language differences, the early learning journey is more complicated.

They need that extra bit of understanding and help that your donations make possible.

An example of positive change for the whole whānau comes in a story from a parent whose son Teddy* was helped immensely by attending a Salvation Army run Early Childhood Education Centre (ECEC):

'Moving to a new area brings with it changes and some difficulties. This happened to us last year, and one of the biggest difficulties was with our two-year-old son, Teddy, and finding the right care centre for him.

Several centres didn't work out, which damaged his wellbeing. He was really struggling, and so were we as a family. Then we found The Salvation Army Centre!

Part of Teddy's difficulties was a language barrier. We're a Pasifika family and English isn't Teddy's home language. But a staff member at the centre was quick to learn some phrases to ease Teddy into his new environment.

With language making him feel safe and secure, Teddy was thriving within a week—running, jumping, climbing, riding bikes and making friends. His own communication also improved.

*Name changed to protect his privacy

I am so grateful to the staff of the centre for making us feel so welcome and helping Teddy settle in. I cannot wait to see him make heaps more memories with all the centre staff and other children.

Teddy absolutely loves being at the centre. I can tell this because every morning when we drive in to drop him off, he already has a big smile on his face.

But it's not just Teddy. As a family we've had amazing support. I also say, "thank you" for that.'

—Teddy's mum

As the 'hands' using your donations to fund our many community services, we also thank you. These services simply couldn't happen without your caring and visionary generosity.

Teddy absolutely loves being at the centre. I can tell this because every morning when we drive in to drop him off, he already has a big smile on his face.

The very real impact of your kindness in Teddy's life comes from one of our ECEC staff:

'Teddy has made progress in leaps and bounds. He's developing a consistent routine, social skills, language and communication, and even some positive dietary changes.'

Teddy's mum thanks you, and so do we.

'You're Not Alone'—1000 Reasons Why Your Support is so Important

See how your support ensures families receive the support they need to get the best possible Early Childhood support.

There is so much a parent wants to provide their children and so many contributing factors as to whether this is possible. Helen Armstrong, National Coordinator of Early Childhood Education (ECE) provides some great insights into this vital developmental space and the approach that The Salvation Army is taking to help Kiwi whānau provide the best outcomes.

'In an ideal world, Early Childhood Education would be affordable and available to all children to get the best start in life ... sadly the reality is the provision of ECE in New Zealand is fast becoming profit driven, with quality of care being the victim.'

The Salvation Army ECE programme is committed to providing services which are people-focused and committed to making positive differences for children and their families. We operate on a best-practice model with smaller child-teacher ratios.

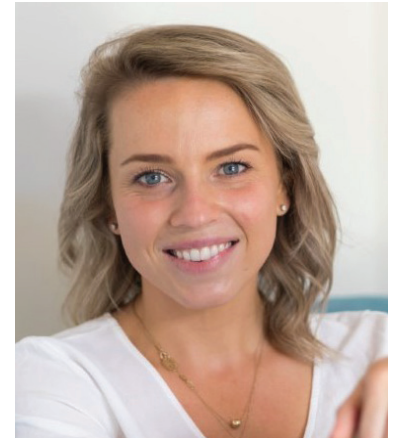
The relationship connects teacher and child at a critical part of their foundational journey. It also allows us to connect with parents and assist them with other needs through our wraparound services. These include practical support of food parcels, provision of child car seats, personal support of counselling, parenting programmes and financial mentoring.

'What we see is that families get the support they need, and they don't feel left to do everything alone. Some children have diverse needs which can lead to a family struggling, and not knowing what to do. Our ECE centre staff can provide advice and guidance, as well as connect families with the appropriate professional support. For example, a child identified with speech language concerns could then be connected with a speech language therapist. Our centre staff also partner with parents on strategies going forward.'

While it's different for every child and their family, one recent example involving a refugee family comes to mind. They were a little adrift being in a new country, culture and language and lacking traditional family support. Their child came to one of our ECE centres and through this, we became part of the family and they gained a greater sense of belonging. With her young child at the ECE centre, the mother was able to look for a job and the family were more economically secure.'

Parents and children with supportive whānau, as a collective unit, will provide greater positive outcomes and have maximum benefit in those most important first 1000 days.

Children are resilient and amazing humans. But we know that the impact of what their environment is in those first 1000 days is vital, not only to brain development but to their future lives. The evidence is unquestionable that children who receive a highly nurtured, secure, positive environment with good nutrition and a loving whānau will see their brains open to learning and growth.



▲ HELEN

The Salvation Army ECE programme is committed to providing services which are people-focused and committed to making positive differences for children and their families.

Conversely, those who are exposed to highly stressful, vulnerable environments without learning and social interaction are more likely to struggle in life and repeat that cycle as they become parents themselves.

The Salvation Army's 1000 Days Appeal recognises both the vital period of the first 1000 days of a child's life, but also acknowledges the support that is provided to families over 1000 days to have a profound and positive impact on the family unit.

The Salvation Army does not turn away families who are struggling to pay fees. We embrace those families to ensure that they know 'they are not alone' to provide the best of care and all the support needed to help the whānau make a transformational change for the better.

Salvation Army supporters can be assured that wraparound care is having significant impacts on peoples' lives, and is also helping shape the lives of the next Kiwi generation.

A Double 'Thank You' Especially For You

'Thank you for all you do for new mums.'
(From a mum who joined our SPACE programme)

'Thank you for your donations which make The Salvation Army SPACE programme possible.'
(Elaine Thompson, SPACE facilitator)

There's great power in working together, starting with the partnership that you give to us in helping to transform lives.

Over the past four years, we have been working with SPACE (Supporting Parents Alongside Children's Education) to provide a parent and child education programme for first-time caregivers and their babies.

Becoming a new parent can be both joyful and frightening. Suddenly you're responsible for this beautiful new life, and you feel totally unprepared and alone—especially when difficulties arise. And then there's the post birth hormonal rollercoaster and the emotions!

Sue Henshaw, the territorial leader for The Salvation Army's 'Keeping Children Safe' team, shares that, 'people will be surprised by how many parents out there are feeling lost, isolated, unsure and anxious. This is especially so when parents are facing other stresses in addition to a new baby.'

SPACE provides a safe environment with no judgment, where caregivers and babies get together once a week with the freedom to be themselves and talk about anything and everything that's happening to them.

The SPACE programme fits perfectly into our wraparound services. And for those new parents joining the programme, the support from a shared community is hugely beneficial.

Elaine, our Queenstown SPACE facilitator talks about examples like Ruth.

Ruth is working alongside Elaine, and often shares her personal experience about being a new mother. 'I help new mothers in our SPACE programme through sharing my story of postnatal depression.'

'I've seen others transform with each telling of Ruth's story, growing and holding themselves higher.' says Elaine.

Talk to any of the SPACE parents, and these are some of the heartfelt responses you'll hear:

'SPACE was exactly what I needed when I was having a tough time with a premature, colicky, refluxy baby. I struggled to leave the house, but at SPACE I found the most welcoming, caring family I could ever have wished for.'



'Sharing with other women at SPACE, we talked, laughed and cried. At meetings and outings we've made friends for life.'

'I'm so grateful for being able to share tips and ideas on parenting and child development. Also to learn about products, resources and activities to help us navigate being first time parents.'

'Sharing with other women at SPACE, we talked, laughed and cried. At meetings and outings we've made friends for life.'

The other benefit of SPACE is helping new parents and caregivers be informed about the first crucial 1000 days in the development of their babies' lives.

For anyone who has the future of New Zealand at heart, our recent 1000 Days Appeal shows the Army's commitment to supporting the next generation.

You have the opportunity to contribute to securing that future by donating to this newsletter appeal.

By giving our future citizens the best start now, there's less to unpick in the future. It just makes so much sense. Use the QR code for a quick link to donate now.



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