



Te Ope Whakaora

# TRUE HEROES

*Everyday people helping every day*



▲ From left to right: Whakapakari Mahi Programme Lead Facilitator Kath More; Whangarei Community Ministries Leader Teneille Johnson; Programme Facilitator Shane McLean.

## Building Confidence, Breaking Barriers

Thanks to True Heroes like you, transformation happens every day through the Whakapakari Mahi Programme. This holistic initiative—meaning to strengthen for work—is designed to empower individuals to overcome barriers and build brighter futures by upskilling them for the workforce. For Community Ministries Manager Teneille, the heart of the programme is simple: ‘We talk about this as an opportunity to invest in yourself. It’s about doing better for you.’

The people who walk through the doors come from all walks of life. ‘We see a really diverse range of people from many different backgrounds,’ says Teneille. ‘Some have been struggling with mental health challenges, cognitive disabilities, trauma, and addictions. We’ve even had clients with serious health conditions, which can be tricky to navigate. Our team often focuses on connecting them with doctors, counselling, and other essential services. We remind them that they’re not alone. There’s strength in community, and that’s what we aim to build,’ continues Teneille.

The team works hard to create an environment where people feel respected and supported. Lead Facilitator Kath highlights the importance of creating safe spaces for learning. ‘Seeing whānau take the tools they’ve learned and share them with others—that’s huge. We know what works because we’ve applied it in our own lives.’ Teneille adds, ‘we’ve realised we can’t just give food. We need to provide spaces for education and support. That’s what wraparound care looks like.’

The programme is about more than job readiness; it’s about life readiness. Alongside practical skills like CV writing and interview preparation, the programme includes the Positive Lifestyle Programme (PLP), which Teneille calls foundational. ‘PLP gives whānau the opportunity to look inwards. Without that, you can’t deal with other barriers to work.’

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With your support, participants also take part in Oranga Kai (cooking classes), Safe Men Safe Family (breaking cycles of violence), Money Moves (budgeting and financial mentoring), and physical fitness activities, including a shared goal of completing a 5km loop track. After the course, six months of pastoral care ensures ongoing support. ▶



Facilitator Shane sees identity as a key focus. ‘A lot of the men we work with have lost confidence. They’ve been through tough stuff—violence, addiction, broken relationships—and they’re carrying shame. So, we create a space where they can open up. For many Māori men, identity is huge. Being faith-based, we can bring God into the conversation and say, “You might think this is who you are, but here’s who we believe you are.” That different perspective is powerful,’ he says.

One participant shares how the Whakapakari Mahi programme changed her life. ‘It gave me a valuable taste of what it’s like to attend a course with a larger group of people, which really helped build my confidence to get into tertiary education. I came away with practical skills, like understanding how to cope with challenges and build resilience. I now feel much stronger.’

As a True Hero, your regular giving has helped the programme to grow significantly, with capacity now increasing to 20 participants per intake. The team remains committed to holistic care—addressing housing, food security, and wellbeing alongside employment readiness. As Kath puts it, ‘Your past doesn’t define your future—you get to choose where you want to be.’

## Rebuilding a Life

When Keith\* came to The Salvation Army Financial Mentoring team midway through 2025, he was exhausted by loss and debt. In a short space of time, everything had slipped away—his family, his job, and eventually his home.

What began as casual sports betting had spiralled into something he could no longer control. ‘I loved the rush,’ he says quietly, ‘and I got carried away.’

‘All my mates were doing it, and I wanted to fit in, be part of the crowd, be the man.’

By the time he reached out for help, he was carrying more than overdue bills. He was carrying shame, fear, and the belief that he had failed. ‘I thought I wasn’t good with money,’ he admits. ‘I didn’t know where to start. I had no idea.’

Keith’s story is one many whānau across Aotearoa understand all too well—mounting debt, unpaid bills, unstable housing, and the heavy pressure of financial stress. For those stuck in the struggle, it can feel like there’s no way out.

That’s where The Salvation Army’s Financial Mentoring programme steps in. Our mentors do more than create budgets. They listen without judgement, walk alongside clients at their lowest moments, and help them see hope where they once saw only fear.

For Keith, the turning point began with understanding what support he was entitled to. His mentor went with him to the Ministry of Social Development (MSD)—an overwhelming step that took courage. Together they worked through the paperwork, and Keith finally accessed Work and Income support.



‘That moment changed everything,’ he says. ‘It wasn’t just money. It was hope.’

From there, Keith began rebuilding his life—step by step. Financial Mentoring isn’t just numbers—it’s dignity, confidence, and a future.

\* Identity has been changed to protect privacy.



## Welcome to your True Heroes newsletter

I pray you are well. As I reflect on the past few months, I am reminded again of God's enduring faithfulness and the compassion that sustains our mission. Thanks to your support, we are privileged to see many remarkable acts of generosity, partnership and hope that occur.

Our frontline teams continue to see a growing number of whānau seeking support with kai, housing, budgeting, and financial stability. February saw the start of our Fresh Start Appeal – *It All Adds Up*. This appeal highlights just how crucial financial mentoring is for whānau stepping into a new year, especially as monthly bills, school costs, and the price of everyday essentials place ongoing pressure on household budgets.

We have just released *State of the Nation 2026, Foundations of Wellbeing*. This offers a clear and honest picture of the challenges facing our communities. The findings are sobering, but they also strengthen our resolve to advocate boldly and care compassionately for those most affected.

Hunger for Colour, our long-running partnership with Resene, is currently helping to refill our foodbanks by providing an exchange of donated cans for free test pots of paint. Retired officer/chaplain Gavin Baxter is similarly endeavouring to support these efforts by hiking the length of New Zealand, raising vital funds to restock the empty shelves of foodbanks after Christmas. You can donate to his cause here: [tinyurl.com/marchingformeals](https://tinyurl.com/marchingformeals).

We face this time with confidence in God's provision, and with deep gratitude for you, our donors, supporters, and prayer partners who make this work possible. As a True Hero, your generosity ensures that struggling families receive not only practical support, but also the hope, dignity, and encouragement that come from being seen and cared for.

It truly does take an Army, and I am humbled to serve alongside you.

With heartfelt appreciation,

**Commissioner  
Janine Donaldson**

Territorial Leader,  
The Salvation Army  
New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga  
and Samoa Territory



## Honouring Friendship through Tribute Giving

**Having great friends is one of life's greatest gifts. Remembering them after they've gone by doing something meaningful in their memory strengthens that unbreakable bond.**

Having great friends is one of life's greatest gifts. Remembering them after they've gone by doing something meaningful in their memory strengthens that unbreakable bond.

That's exactly what Wayne\* did after losing his lifelong friend, Bob\*. Heartbroken by Bob's passing, Wayne chose to honour him through The Salvation Army's Tribute Giving programme.

'Bob and I went way back,' Wayne recalls. 'We were rugby and cricket mates from our teens. Rugby really united us—Bob was in the forwards; I was an outside back—and we played together for years. When we couldn't play anymore, we coached and then became sideline critics,' Wayne laughs. 'Even as our families grew, we stayed close. You don't get many mates like that. He was like a brother to me.'

When Bob became ill, Wayne stood by him. 'It was one game he couldn't win,' Wayne says quietly. 'Watching him pass away was tough. I felt helpless. You always think you'll have more time—more laughs, more chats—but suddenly it's gone.'

After grieving, Wayne reflected on Bob's life and values. 'Bob often talked about how The Sallies helped him and his mum when times were hard. He said, 'Wayne, when we had no one else, they were there.' That stuck with me. He wasn't overly religious, but he always praised them for being practical and kind.'

Inspired by that, Wayne decided to give back in Bob's name. 'I thought, what better way to honour him than by helping others through Tribute Giving? It's a way to keep his memory alive and make a real difference. Every time I donate, I feel like I'm still doing something with Bob—still part of the team.'

You can do the same. Tribute Giving is a powerful way to celebrate someone you love while supporting those in need.

To talk about tribute giving, please contact a relationship manager on our website:

[Salvationarmy.org.nz/TributeGiving](https://salvationarmy.org.nz/TributeGiving)

\* Identities have been changed to protect privacy.

# Helping a mum find hope

Mary\*, a mother of four who immigrated here, found herself facing a devastating reality. Serious safety issues within her family led to an immediate separation, making her a single parent almost overnight. Alone in a new country, with no support network, and four children depending on her, Mary felt completely overwhelmed.

‘I remember sitting in my car and crying,’ Mary recalls. ‘I didn’t know where to go or who to ask for help. I felt like my world had fallen apart.’ When Mary walked into a Salvation Army Centre, she was anxious and exhausted. ‘The staff didn’t judge me,’ Mary says softly. ‘They listened. They cared. For the first time, I felt like someone was on my side.’

As a True Hero, your kind regular giving made an enormous difference ensuring that the team could walk alongside Mary through every challenge. The social worker supported her through complex processes with immigration, Oranga Tamariki, and the courts. Because of your support, Mary was able to access therapeutic and medical appointments, and we introduced her to a local church that became a source of community and hope.

**‘To everyone who gives—you changed my life.’**

‘They gave me more than practical help. They gave me emotional support.



They prayed with me when I felt broken. That gave me strength,’ Mary shares. Voluntary work at a local op shop opened new doors; opportunities to meet people, practice English, and regain confidence. ‘I started to feel like myself again,’ Mary says. ‘I wasn’t just surviving—I was growing.’

Today, Mary’s transformation has been remarkable. Her English proficiency and confidence have soared. She now works two jobs, continues to tackle financial challenges with the help of our financial mentor, and has a positive outlook on her future.

‘In a recent exercise, I wrote down words that describe me now,’ Mary smiles. ‘Confident. Independent. Powerful. Determined. Protective.

Resourceful. I never thought I could say those things about myself.’

Mary’s gratitude to True Heroes supporters like you is heartfelt. ‘To every True Hero who gives—you changed my life. You gave me hope when I had none. You didn’t just help me; you helped my children have a future. Thank you.’ She pauses, her voice full of emotion: ‘I used to wake up every day afraid. Now, I wake up believing tomorrow can be better. That’s because of you.’

\* Identity has been changed to protect privacy.



**123,000 people** have been helped through our services in 2025.



## You helped them breathe again

David\* and Pat\* never imagined they would face homelessness in their later years.

The couple, who had lived in the same house for decades, were blindsided when they received an eviction notice. Their rental home needed urgent repairs, and they had nowhere else to go.

‘We were terrified,’ Pat recalls. ‘I work at the hospital, but even with my job, we couldn’t find anywhere we could afford. We didn’t know what to do.’ When they walked into one of our Centres, they were anxious and overwhelmed. But thanks to the generosity of True Hero supporters like you, help was waiting.

‘Our hearts were pounding that day,’ David says quietly. ‘We felt like everything was falling apart. But the staff welcomed us with such kindness. For the first time in weeks, we felt hope.’

As a True Hero, gifts made as part of your regular giving enabled our team to step in, providing practical and emotional support. Our team guided David and Pat through an application for Senior Housing, helping complete online forms, upload documents, and liaise with housing services.

‘They didn’t just give us advice — they walked every step with us,’ Pat says. ‘We couldn’t have done it alone.’

### ‘You gave us security, dignity and hope.’

Within weeks, their application was accepted. Thanks to you, David and Pat are now settled in a safe, healthy home—with lower rent and peace of mind. ‘It’s like a weight has lifted,’ David shares. ‘We can breathe again,’ Pat adds. ‘To everyone who makes a regular donation—you have no idea what your kindness means. You didn’t just give us a house. You gave us security, dignity, and hope.’

They are now able to enjoy simple things again like sharing morning tea on their sunny balcony, reconnecting with neighbours, and planning visits

with their grandchildren.

‘We feel like we belong again,’ Pat says with a smile. ‘That’s priceless.’

As a True Hero, your support makes stories like David and Pat’s possible. Every day, seniors and families across New Zealand face housing crises. Your donations ensure we can respond quickly, provide practical help, and guide people to secure homes.

\* Identities have been changed to protect privacy.

Thank you so much for being part of our story through our True Heroes programme. To discuss your recurring giving, please email Leidean at [trueheroes@salvationarmy.org.nz](mailto:trueheroes@salvationarmy.org.nz) or call her on **022 013 3081**.





# Help always there— thanks to True Heroes

**When Tiffany's son Tommy was diagnosed with cancer—just four days after his second birthday—her world changed overnight.**

'Tommy was diagnosed with cancer, and it's been a very rough road since then,' Tiffany shares. 'Because I'm on my own, I've had a lot of help from you guys, which has been nice—especially because it takes the pressure off.'

The journey has been anything but easy. Tommy's eight months of intensive chemotherapy left Tiffany emotionally and physically drained. The second year brought even more hardship when he developed a serious infection and spent eight weeks in hospital. 'I literally didn't think he was going to make it,' Tiffany recalls. 'And then he made it through—but we had nothing.'

**'We are worth it. We were thought about.'**

Because of your generosity, The Salvation Army could provide not only food support and practical items but emotional support—compassion and understanding. 'It's not just random stuff. It's meaningful. We are worth it. We were thought about,' says Tiffany.

Tiffany found more than material support—she found people who genuinely cared and could empathise with her situation. 'I was so panicky about bugs and stuff... the support worker would drop things to my house or bring it out to the car. Just stuff like that was very considerate.'

As a True Hero supporter, you enabled The Salvation Army's assistance for Tiffany and Tommy to extend beyond food. 'They helped call up WINZ and get things reduced. She would advocate for me, which I didn't know you could do,' Tiffany says. 'They reduced the debt payment so I could have a little bit extra each week.'

**'Some weeks are tough. Other weeks are better. But they're always here.'**

And the help was always there, no matter the day or the need. 'Even if I had food on Monday and had nothing on Friday, you would still give me something. Some weeks are tough. Other weeks are better. But they're always here. They don't turn you away.'

Tiffany appreciated how the team got to know her family and tailored their support. She emphasises that it's more than just food—it's connection, care, and hope. 'You've got people you can reach out to—even just to talk. Because there's things you don't know, like with the power and stuff. That does help.' Tiffany's story is one of strength, love, but most importantly the ongoing support of True Heroes like you. 'If you've got hope, you've got something,' she says.