

Together

Autumn 2019

YOUR SUPPORT IN ACTION



Te Ope Whakaora



▲ JD AND RICHARD

Giving Hope to Youth

19 year old Richard credits The Salvation Army's Aspire Programme for turning his life around when he was younger, moving him from a path of violence and anger to one where he is now able to help others.

When Richard first moved to New Zealand from Tonga with his family at age five, he found it very challenging to adapt to Kiwi life. Everything from the weather, schooling, even speaking English and trying to make friends was difficult for him, making him feel like an outsider.

As he got older he would often misunderstand things that people said or did, and would end up in trouble as a result; he grew angry and distrustful of both adults and peers.

Then a key moment in his life happened. He was selected by his teacher to join Aspire, a year-long programme run by The Salvation Army that helps youth from all walks of life.

Aspire first began in 2015 to help young people—particularly those from lower socio economic communities who were also struggling with school attendance—to gain the confidence and skills to achieve their goals.

It's been an incredible success to date, with over 1,000 young Kiwis aged 11-16 having taken part in the programme, which includes mentoring, a group adventure, family support and involvement in a community project.

National Aspire Coordinator, Michael Smith, says that while some children are able to follow through on their aspirations from a young age, other young people have a range of social and circumstantial barriers that prevent them from reaching for their dreams.

“Aspire changed my behaviour and my attitude towards others.”

‘For every child that has the confidence, support and skills to face their future with confidence, others just see barriers—and they give up because they don't see how to overcome them.

This can lead to poverty, social isolation and a future without hope—that's where Aspire comes in.’

Richard says that he quickly realised that Aspire was so much more than just a programme to ‘deal with unruly kids’.

‘I met this awesome guy called Jon who was the guy leading the programme and a youth worker in our community. He inspired me 100 per cent and I reckon he’s a big reason I’m where I am now.

At Aspire we learnt a whole lot of skills and behaviour every week, we went on some mean trips to places like Mt Ruapehu and the Blue Mountain Adventure Centre—and best of all, we got to put everything we’d learnt into action with a community project.’

The programme also connected Richard to other Salvation Army programmes and initiatives, and helped him to build much-needed friendships with his peers.

Richard looks back on his experiences years later and says that Aspire is one of the key moments in my life.

‘It changed my behaviour and my attitude towards others.’ So much so that Richard is now a youth worker in training with the Salvation Army in Mt Roskill, with one of his roles supporting the Aspire Programme back at the school where it all started.

He’s now completed his first year of a Diploma in Community and Youth Studies, and is keen to pay it forward.

‘I want to give back to the next generation of young people in Aspire who, like me, need an adult who is interested and cares about them.’

How Aspire works:

Led by experienced Salvation Army youth workers in 16 centres and schools around the country, the year-long Aspire programme involves weekly sessions in groups of 10, over 32 weeks.

Activities include a three-day adventure programme of tramping, abseiling, caving, white water rafting and more, led by qualified outdoor instructors.

There is a strong focus on developing teamwork and project skills by planning and implementing a community project to address a local issue, as well as goal setting.

Aspire is based on the Circle of Courage youth development model. It provides a fun, supportive environment for personal development, helping young people connect positively to others, achieve and master essential life skills, take responsibility for their decisions, and live with purpose and generosity.

Social workers and youth workers from The Salvation Army work with Aspire families to provide any additional support needed to strengthen the home environment. Events are also run to better connect families together.



State of the Nation

This year’s State of the Nation report, titled *Are You Well? Are We Safe?* takes a well-being approach to considering our social progress as a nation.

It looks at the differences between those of us who are getting by, and our most vulnerable New Zealanders.

The report shows key areas of concern, including record levels of household debt and a growing gap in educational achievement between poorer and more well off communities.

It also looks at the rising rates of offender recidivism, and evidence of increasing levels of activity related to social hazards such as alcohol, drugs and gambling.

Read the full report online at www.salvationarmy.org.nz





From Our Public Relations Director

A new year brings with it both new challenges and new opportunities—and as you'll see in this edition of Together, The Salvation Army has a unique way of turning one into the other.

We pride ourselves in both recognising issues and need in our community, and working proactively and positively on bringing about a positive outcome. Often we lead the way on finding these solutions and it has become a hallmark of the support we provide.

A fantastic example of this is The Good Shop, which directly addresses the issue of predatory lending in some of our most deprived communities, by introducing an ethical lending module that allows people with debt issues to get the help they need.

We hope that it 'disrupts' this industry by showing others how it can be done ethically and fairly.

The Aspire Programme is another example; back in 2015 we looked at the rising issue of at-risk youth and their negative impact on families and in society, and decided to do something about it.

Aspire offers youth a path out of trouble, giving them direction, mentoring and the tools needed for them to succeed in life. It's been a resounding success so far, thanks to the support of people like you who choose to support us.

In other parts of the country, we see people in the community—particularly elderly—who are struggling with loneliness and isolation.

So we started the Senior Programme, which pairs up volunteers like Joe with people like Elvor who are seeking friendship and someone to talk to. The difference it makes in both their lives is amazing.

And our work in the addictions space, providing a non-judgmental, supportive space for people like Natalie who are struggling with drug or alcohol dependence, shows that we're dedicated to helping those who others have turned their back on.

As a valued supporter, you play a part in all these outcomes being achieved; thank you for being someone who chooses to be part of the solution.

Tim Hamilton
Public Relations Director
The Salvation Army

New Year Honours for Major Roberts

After spending the better part of his life fighting injustice in New Zealand, The Salvation Army's Major Campbell Roberts has been recognised in the 2019 New Year's Honours list.

The 71-year-old social justice veteran was made a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the New Year Honours list, for services to the community. As the founder of the Salvation Army's social policy and parliamentary unit (SPPU), he's long been a trusted voice advocating for those in need.

Major Roberts insists that he's really just the 'front man'.

'I am grateful for the honour, but in some sense I feel I only really represent a whole lot of people who have been working with me over the years.

You feel very humble because, in fact, you realise that you've been a privileged part of a connection to some very talented people who have offered ideas and help, or worked alongside you.'

Despite 'officially' retiring five years ago, Roberts still works part time as a consultant to the SPPU unit, which works closely with Government to eradicate poverty by encouraging policies and practices that strengthen the social framework of New Zealand.

'My intention is to use some of my experience and influence to work with community agencies and help people, particularly young people, who want to be engaged in the policy area—people who want to make change and make those connections.'

Roberts chuckles when asked if he would describe himself as a social justice warrior.

'I've got a passion for social justice, and I love New Zealand. I'm trying to find different ways to build a better society, and that's something I think I'll be doing for the rest of my life.'



Time for a Change

Natalie thought she'd miss alcohol forever. But more than two years after being in The Salvation Army Bridge programme, she says life is better than it's ever been.

On her first day of giving up alcohol, things were at a low for Natalie. In her mid-forties, drinking to excess had now become not just a common occurrence for her, but a compulsion.

'When I wasn't drinking I felt empty, as if I was rudderless.'

Natalie says that her addiction to alcohol left her hanging by a thread, bringing with it severe anxiety and depression.

'I knew for a long time my drinking wasn't making me a better parent—but I thought drinking was good for me. So I figured if I made up for it with my kids in other areas, that'd be okay.'

It wasn't until Natalie's daughter was admitted to hospital with anorexia that she realised something was undeniably wrong. She despaired that her daughter had been losing weight and she hadn't even noticed—it served as a wake-up call.

She Googled 'help for alcoholism' and The Salvation Army Bridge came up, so she phoned and talked to their team.

'It wasn't at all scary having that conversation, and they encouraged me to come in and check them out.'

The Salvation Army Bridge offers the opportunity for people to evaluate their alcohol or drug use and explore ways to bring things under control again.

Its person-centred approach combines elements of partnership, community reinforcement and the 12 Step Recovery Journey to offer an evidence-based, best practice treatment for people affected by their harmful use of, or dependency on alcohol and/or drugs.

Michael Douglas, National Operations Manager for Bridge, says that Bridge provides a safe, integrated and high quality treatment service to people who need help.

'Our treatment is built around supporting, challenging and encouraging people to make positive changes in their lives so that they can find hope, direction, peace and stability.'

"I needed to create enough space to sort myself out and Bridge gave me that space."

A case worker was assigned to work and assist Natalie to develop an individualised treatment plan through the programme, and she became a day client.

'I knew I needed to create enough space to sort myself out and the Bridge gave me that space. I was really lucky because Mum moved in to look after the kids.'

A valuable lesson that Natalie learnt on the Bridge programme was that what she thought alcohol was, was a myth.

'Alcohol had fooled me into thinking it was doing good things for me, when the opposite was true. I also picked up some good strategies and tools to change my behaviour—the people there helped me immeasurably.'

The funny thing is, all the things that'd made me drink—the anxiety, depression, feeling unworthy or that life had dealt me a bad hand—when I stopped drinking, they went away.'

Natalie has now been sober for over two-and-a-half years, and her life has turned around as a result. Her career is back on track and her children are content and doing well at school.

'I thought I would miss alcohol forever and have this huge gap where the bottle used to be. I'm lucky I got to discover that isn't the case.'

Natalie says she has many people to thank for her new life.

'Myself for a start for making the change, my wonderful family and the amazing people at The Salvation Army Bridge.'

Unlikely Best Mates: Joe and Elvor

An innovative Salvation Army programme is helping elderly people at risk of isolation and loneliness, and in the process is creating life-long friendships.

Two years ago, 28 year old builder Joe O'Donnell moved to Papamoa from Yorkshire, England. He plays for the local rugby club and enjoys a BBQ with his mates.

But what many people don't know is that every Wednesday after work Joe has a date with a special lady almost 70 years older than him.

'It's not the norm really. People are very taken back by it but everything's mostly been positive,' said Joe.

Elvor Shaw was born in South Africa, moving to England when she was 5, then New Zealand later in life. She was a dancer in her younger days, performing in the West End.

Now a spritely 96-year-old, Elvor lives alone in Tauranga. Her husband passed away 35 years ago, her two children live in another city.

'What do I love about Joe? Just about everything. He's got a lovely smile, he's always cheerful. He makes me feel very happy,' Elvor said.

Joe and Elvor met six months ago after Joe volunteered with the Senior Programme, an initiative run by The Salvation Army. The programme pairs up elderly people with younger volunteers, all in the name of friendship.

Established in March 2017, there are currently 82 elderly people looking for companionship, and over 51 volunteers.

'I thought about my grandma back home and if she was in Elvor's situation, I thought I hope someone will go and visit her. So I wanted to do it,' Joe said.

Elvor and Joe often head out on their dates, going to a Christmas party together and Joe even introduced her to the joys of "Google".



▲ ELVOR AND JOE

Elvor is one of thousands of elderly people living alone in the Bay of Plenty area. The region has an ageing population with an estimated increase in octogenarians of 6 percent annually, reflecting a nationwide trend.

Most of the volunteers for this initiative give up an hour of their time each week. For someone like Elvor, it can mean the world of difference, and she is very grateful to Joe.

'I don't know what I would do without you, if you stopped coming, I will find you,' Elvor says.

Original article by Shilo Kino, NZ Herald.



Keen to Volunteer?

The Salvation Army is looking for friendly and energetic people to take part in its annual Red Shield Appeal street collection from 29th April—5th May 2019.

The Red Shield Appeal street collection helps raise funds to allow the Army to provide vital social services to those in need across New Zealand, and relies on the generosity of Kiwis like you as either a donor or a collection volunteer.

Being a collector is easy; you only need to give up an hour or two of your time and it's a rewarding chance to engage with the community while also supporting a worthy cause.

To register your interest, contact Rhondda Middleton at rhondda.middleton@salvationarmy.org.nz

Or visit www.salvationarmy.org.nz/RedShieldVolunteer



▲ JODI HOARE AND THE GOOD SHOP TRUCK

A Good Alternative to Debt

Last month saw the launch of The Good Shop, a new Salvation Army community initiative that provides a positive alternative for people who cannot afford to purchase goods on credit.

The Good Shop concept builds upon previous work undertaken by the Army around community finance, by introducing a mobile loan assessment and approval service which also allows clients to purchase items directly with no markups—the first of its kind in New Zealand.

It also seeks to disrupt a trend of unethical lending by other mobile lending operators, some of whom demand up to 800 per cent interest in their lending contract—which many people in debt have little choice but to agree to.

The Good Shop Project Manager Jodi Hoare says that The Salvation Army needed to start reform immediately.

‘Every day we see people trapped in a cycle of debt by these loans, with no other options open to them and often with limited economic understanding.

The Good Shop will positively disrupt the current mobile trading business model that can have extortionately high-interest rates and repayment plans, by providing a safe alternative solution to people who may struggle with transport, are unable to make upfront payments or cannot otherwise obtain credit to purchase what they need.’

From late February the first Good Shop van, staffed by a Salvation Army social worker and community loan approval person, hit the roads around South Auckland suburbs—particularly low socio-economic areas that are often targeted by predatory lenders.

Clients are able to make an appointment with them to visit their home, where staff can assess the client as being

suitable to being provided an interest-free loan for goods and consumables that their household needs.

Essential household items such as food, furniture, electronics, appliances, whiteware and baby items will be available via online shopping technology on board the truck.

Salvation Army workers are on hand to assist clients plus provide referrals to other services and welfare that may benefit them, including budgeting advice.

Jodi says while working in the Army’s Community Finance programme over the past few years, she saw a real need in the community for this kind of programme.

‘We’ve seen many clients affected by other lenders, they don’t have another option of getting what they need—no interest free store deal because of their credit history.

We see all the time, both in research and in our community finance programmes, clients who have taken on debt without an assessment as to whether they can afford it or not—and they end up in much greater debt as a result because there was no other option available to them.’

This initiative wouldn’t have been possible without delivery partners The Warehouse Group, BNZ and Countdown, and additional financial support from MSD, The Tindall Foundation and Nikau Foundation.

‘Thanks to the generosity of our partners, a significant number of people in need have an opportunity to avoid the problem debt cycle as we start to build financial capability in these communities,’ says Jodi.

The Salvation Army plans to roll out the initiative across more communities with high deprivation and where the Army has a strong presence providing social services, with a second vehicle already planned for Wellington in mid-2019.