



Spring 2011 Edition

REPORTER

SOUTHERN AFRICA TERRITORY

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The day the children warmed our hearts

It's **Mandela Day** and the excitement is almost palpable at Diepkloof Combined School in the Diepkloof township and informal settlement west of Johannesburg.

As a small convoy of vans and cars from The Salvation Army drive into the gates, the little children of Grade 0, 1 and 2 children gaze excitedly out of the windows and chatter amongst themselves; the older children are restless. Huge pots of food are being unloaded and carried into the kitchen, along with around 1,600 plates, dishes, forks and spoons; then piles of blankets are unloaded, along with huge boxes piled with crisps. Other boxes filled with cleaning materials and donations of children's books are carried to the library.

It's Mandela Day and, as the winter sun rises over the classroom buildings to reach the quadrangle, the youngest pupils line up to jump and clap as they sing songs.

It's a fact that many children living in Diepkloof come to school on an empty stomach, and have no food to eat at lunchtime. Hunger affects a child's concentration and

energy, it impacts on memory retention and school attendance, and increases unacceptable behaviour. The academic achievements of children who eat at lunchtime, and have breakfast, have been found to be higher.

Right now, Commissioners Andrè and Silvia Cox – who head up The Salvation Army across the whole of its Southern Africa Territory – are keen to begin handing out the warm, brightly coloured blankets to the children. A queue forms and shiny, wide-eyed little faces break into broad smiles. 'Thank You' are shyly whispered as each child receive this welcome gift.

It's Mandela Day and, although The Salvation Army works every day in communities where poverty is rife and where the need is great, this day is extra-special. In honour of Nelson Mandela's birthday, we've added to our outreach programmes by touching the lives of around 1,600 children at this school. There's already a Corps (Church) in the area and the number of members is steadily growing.

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The similar, sinister threads connecting Human Trafficking



When *Lindi and *Goodness (*above – names have been changed*) arrived from different cities, on different days, at The Salvation Army's Beth Shan House, a protective home for abused and trafficked women, they told stories that were alarmingly similar. They'd each, unwittingly, been enticed into prostitution by an old school friend they knew quite well. In each case, these friends had returned home, one to Katlehong, one to Daveyton, and invited ex-school friends to visit for the weekend in Rosettenville and Pretoria respectively. Both Lindi and Goodness's mothers had died; each of them had left school but had no job. And each one was then introduced that night to a Nigerian "uncle" who offered them a place to stay for the weekend. With no money and no way of getting back home, each one said "Yes"!

Perhaps you will read this and think only of how foolish these girls were. But you and I do not live in the hearts and minds of these highly vulnerable teenagers: without parental guidance, and living a life steeped in poverty, the idea of a weekend of fun with a friend was very appealing... an escape from the grind of poverty and boredom. Both were carefully selected because of who they were, and both made bad choices and life-changing mistakes.

Lindi and Goodness were both encouraged right away to smoke a pipe containing crack cocaine, known as **Rock** – a cheap derivative of cocaine – which provides an instant, intense and euphoric experience. But its immediacy also extends to its highly addictive properties. The girls were told that, to have more of this substance, they had to work by bringing in "customers" with whom to have sex in the sordid, dirty environment – a rundown house and flat – in which they were staying. Their food 'allowance' of R30 per day was paid if they had brought in enough 'business'. If not, the girls were punished... there were beatings with electric cords, and some were burned on a hot stove.

With the encouragement of individuals and organisations, including Salvation Army workers, who walk the streets in the evenings trying to show these girls that they *do* have the choice to leave, giving them telephone numbers to call for help, both Lindi and Goodness managed to arrange their escape and come to Beth Shan. They were both terrified until they were safely inside the house. They are free to leave if they wish. In fact, both of them have already been drawn back to satisfy their drug addiction, and both have returned to Beth Shan, determined to change their lives for the better.

This sinister, common thread that drew these girls – and hundreds more – into the morass of human trafficking, cannot and should not be ignored. Majors Margaret and Geoff Stafford and staff offer a warm haven of peace, kindness and security at Beth Shan.



Durban leads the community way

Captains Moya and Glen Hay are making good on their resolution to tackle a wide variety of social problems (highlighted earlier this year in the *Reporter*) in the communities near and beyond the Montpelier Corps, near Greyville, in Durban.

Moya Hay – a great believer in the importance of early childhood education – visited the informal settlement of Springfield Park with Councillor Mtshali. It's had far-reaching results: the Montpelier Centre will run a **TRAINING PROGRAMME** for up to 18 women who currently run crèches with no equipment and no stimulation for the little ones in their care. The 4-week curriculum starts September and focuses on the use of recycled material – like paper, plastics and tins – that are abundant in the township. They will learn to make their own playdough, glue and paints to produce toys like cardboard animals, rattles, and more. They'll be taught to stimulate young minds with games and learning. "Our biggest challenge is to get children thinking and stimulated. These courses will make life-changing differences in the children's lives," she says.

The afternoon **HOMEWORK CENTRE** is now up and running, with 18 children from the nearby primary school coming daily to do homework and learn to use a computer keyboard, under supervision; they also enjoy a hot meal before going home (*above*).

In addition, the **COMPUTER LITERACY COURSE** – teaching basic MS Word, Powerpoint and Excel – is now up and running. The current five students all hope that, on completion, they can find jobs where they can use their newfound skills.

Also close to the hearts of Moya and Glen Hay is their popular **"HOW TO"** adult support course attended by nearly 30 men and women each Tuesday evening. The course guides them in concepts like problem-solving, communication, decision-making, anger management, ethics, responsibilities... and much more. Their active ministry also includes **MARRIAGE COUNSELLING COURSES** for couples planning to tie the knot and an **AIDS SUPPORT GROUP** that deals with health issues and teaches crafts to help people earn a living.

In so many ways, the work of Captains Moya and Glen Hay (*right*) and their loyal group of volunteers and staff, is touching the lives of the hundreds of people by imparting practical skills, life skills and educational knowledge, and by offering opportunities to adults and children. Yet, it may well be, that it is the Hays' wonderful examples of the hope, faith, love, acceptance and integrity by which they live every day, that guide and motivate others *most of all!*



Starting with the end in mind

The ideal environment in which to bring up a child is a happy, well-adjusted family, of course. But, in South Africa today, there are, literally, millions of children who will never have this experience: they are either orphaned (many because of AIDS) or have been rescued from inappropriate or life-threatening situations.

Is there hope for children institutionalised through no fault or choice of their own? Those who find their way into **The Salvation Army's Homes for babies and children** are fortunate. Mindful of the enormous responsibility of caring for these vulnerable children, The Salvation Army understands the importance of their early years, and is always mindful of what kind of young adults they could potentially become when the time comes for them to leave our care and enter the wide world beyond our doors.

Salvation Army officers and staff are trained to ensure that a loving, nurturing environment is provided, in which a child can develop – spiritually, intellectually, emotionally. This includes the importance of babies and children to see love, concern, kindness and compassion in the eyes of their carers, to offer opportunities for hugs, kisses, laps to sit on and backs to climb on. They must make every effort to gently break down reactive barriers by earning a child's trust; they must encourage a child's confidence and self-esteem as they grow older and, in the safe and homely environment of The Salvation Army's facilities, they encourage communication, problem solving and the develop of the child's own, unique identity.

A visit to **Strathyre Home for Girls** in Joburg offers a glimpse into the life of girls like *Lily (*above right*) who has lived here since she was 12 and was rescued, with her sister, from a busy city street corner. Her sister was fostered, but Lily stayed on. "It was hard at first: I had to get used to not having my Mom around," she says. "The Salvation Army arranged for me to see a therapist. It helped. This Home has taught me patience and love: thanks to the kind people here, I'm the person I am today." Lily is now studying at a beauty college and, at 18, she's preparing to leave Strathyre within a few months. "Before leaving, I'm going to give a talk to the children here about how Strathyre has helped me, about how grateful I am for the life I've had here."

What is apparent here at Strathyre is that there's encouragement for the girls not only to have their own dreams, but to try and fulfil them, too. *Joy has set her heart on photographic modelling, and her good looks and determination may help her to make her dream come true. But, at just 15, she is working hard at school and loves learning about Arts and Culture. When her Mom died in 2005, she was sent to stay with different family members and friends, but "it didn't work out"; she was brought to Strathyre in early 2010. What she's learned in her young life, she says, is that she can handle a lot of difficulties.

Gentle little *Nonhlanhle, 12, also came to Strathyre in 2010 and misses living with her Mom's friend in Edenvale where she lived for a while after her Mom died. "It became difficult for her" she says. "So my sister and I were sent here. I still love going there for the day. But I have good friends here at Strathyre."

Popular matriculant, *Leah, has been at Strathyre since she was four years old. She's a confident girl, thanks to the encouragement she's had here, and



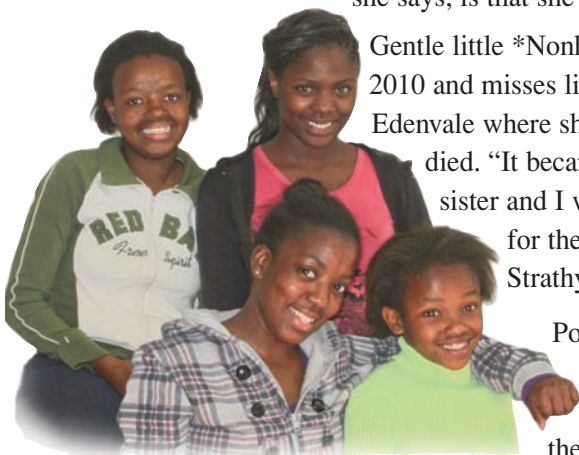
makes friends easily. "I'm going to be a travel agent when I leave school," she says with all the confidence of a typical teenager! *Hope, at Strathyre since she was seven, is also wise. She says Strathyre's taught her that there are ups and downs, but that you should never, ever give up on your dreams!

Motherly Cheryl Lee, Strathyre's Assistant Manager (*above*), says she always tries to put herself into the children's shoes and to combine empathy in her job with her love of children. She has a positive impact on their behaviour, and her ability to listen to their problems helps develop the resilience they'll need to cope with their future adult life.

Cheryl and her colleagues know the potential, long-term effects that their own attitudes and reactions, and the Home environment, have on these young girls' future. They know that what happens here, today, will help the girls become adults who make wise decisions, who can handle life's stumbling blocks, who will exhibit age-appropriate behaviour, and who have the potential to sustain appropriate relationships.

That is why, in all its institutions for children, The Salvation Army always makes an effort to begin with a positive end in mind.

** Names and situations have been changed to protect children's identity.*



Continued from page 1



Commissioners André and Silvia Cox serve lunch to delighted Diepkloof Combined School students (from l to r) Thembelihle, Rose and Maria.

“The Corps that has taken root here links The Salvation Army to this community,” says André Cox “and we are hoping that our efforts today will strengthen our ties with people in Diepkloof. Once all the blankets have been distributed, we will be helping to clean and sort the library used by all the children. Every child here will have a nourishing lunch today; we’ll serve it to them. And children from the most vulnerable families, identified by the school, will get food parcels.”

Then it was time for the Commissioners to help with the library project where they and Salvation Army staff, trainee cadets, and volunteers— including members of the Diepkloof Corps – recorded and catalogued many donated books, put existing books in order and cleaned and arranged bookshelves.

“We’ve learned, from our Diepkloof Corps members how resourceful the people here are,” says Commissioner Cox. “and they have welcomed our support for their children. This has been a truly heartwarming experience. The Salvation Army is planning to continue its interaction with the people of Diepkloof so that we can continue to help in other ways, too.”

It’s Mandela Day and the hours put into helping the children of Diepkloof have made the efforts of the contingent of Salvation Army workers both worthwhile and memorable. “This has been a very moving, wonderful day for us all” says the Commissioner. “We’re blessed to be a part of this.”

Seen from here

Dear Reader,
What is it, I’ve often asked myself, that’s enabled The Salvation Army to maintain its work and ministry, since its humble beginning in 1865 – the year William Booth took his ministry onto the streets and into the hearts of the homeless, poor and hungry?



The answer stared right out at me when we spent Mandela Day at Diepkloof Combined School in Gauteng. Having spent time at the brand new Army Church in Diepkloof I was inspired by how keen its members were to roll up their collective sleeves to help their community. The idea of helping a local school was put to Commissioner André Cox who welcomed the opportunity: he decided to roll up his sleeves, too. **What a great success it was!**

Perhaps it was the faces of the children shining and happy in the winter sun, perhaps it was seeing how much can be achieved when we work together, or the goodwill and joy that was shared by givers and receivers that day... that made me realise just how welcome The Salvation Army is in all communities, and just how many lives can be touched by God’s love in just one day. And I knew then just what it is that keeps the ministry of The Salvation Army so alive and strong. **It’s at times like these that we count our many blessings – one is being able to help others in such meaningful ways!**

I hope you will enjoy this Spring edition of our Reporter newsletter, and that you will continue your much-needed support for The Salvation Army’s efforts. **God bless you.**

Piet Semeno

Captain Piet Semeno, Public Relations Secretary, Southern Africa Territory

Thousands benefit in Winter Campaign

Our late March appeal for winter goods, especially blankets, that we could distribute to the needy met with an overwhelming response from individuals, corporates, trusts and company staff. As a result, thousands of individuals and families all over the country benefitted from donations of 16,000 blankets, hundreds of bags of clothing, hundreds more filled with non-perishable food-stuffs, as well as from thousands more blankets we were able to purchase with the financial donations that poured in. The Salvation Army extends a warm Thank You to all those who’ve helped make this icy winter just a little easier for so many needy people across South Africa.



Clockwise from above: Captain Piet Semeno and Marlene dish up lunch for children; two cute little Grade Rs delighted with their blankets; André Cox and a volunteer catalogue new books; while Patti Niemand directs the library clean-up campaign.

