

# Together

Autumn 2018

YOUR SUPPORT IN ACTION



Te Ope Whakaora



▲ (FROM LEFT) KAREN, JEREMY AND MAJOR BRENDA ENNEVER

## Bringing Family Together

**When the O'Rourke's enlisted the help of The Salvation Army's Family Tracing Service to help answer some long-standing questions, they got more than they could ever wish for—a whole 'new' family in their lives.**

Jeremy O'Rourke, 37, has never had a father in his life. His mother Karen knew who Jeremy's father was—a helicopter pilot on military deployment in New Zealand from the US, whom she'd had an encounter with almost 40 years ago—but lost contact with him when he returned to the States.

Growing up without a father, Jeremy says he fielded constant questions from friends about the absent parent. He only knew what little the man had told his mother during the time they had spent together, and that his middle name—Richard—was also his father's first name.

'Kids can be mean to a child with no dad, but I guess I developed a thick skin about it, I wasn't resentful as I didn't really know what I was missing out on not having a father.'

Karen had searched for Richard many years ago, firstly to inform him that he was a father and also to establish communication between him and his son. But the lack of a surname and other information hindered her progress, and eventually a frustrated Karen gave up hope.

Eight years ago, Karen purchased a laptop which renewed her interest in the search. Using a host of online tools, she discovered more details about Richard, alongside some shocking news—he had died in 1988 at age 33.

Karen was devastated. 'When I told Jeremy he'd died, he felt sad, but he didn't want me to investigate any further.'

She continued to keep Jeremy as the centre of her universe as she had always done, feeling it important to make up for Richard's absence by filling the role of both parents in his life.

The search was put on hold again until last year, when Karen was watching an episode of 'Without a Trace', which focusses on people being reunited with long-lost family, and

her interest was again renewed. Jeremy's attitude had also changed over the years, especially after seeing a photo of his father in the military.

'I wanted to better understand my background by finding out more about him, and to see if I had any aunts or uncles.'

Karen did some research online and discovered that The Salvation Army offered a service called Family Tracing, which helps locate people who have become separated or estranged from their family. Family Tracing's Major Brenda Ennever says it was an unusual case for them, and not just because of the little information that was available.

'It's quite rare for us to take on cases where we already know the person in question is deceased, but we're committed to connecting people together and this story really tugged on our heartstrings.'

Brenda began her intense work, using search techniques to trace any history of Richard Chaney online. After a few weeks she struck gold, discovering a family tree containing Richard Chaney that had been created earlier that year on Ancestry.com. The tree contained a photo of Richard—the same photo Karen had given her at the start of the search.

Brenda made contact with the person who created the family tree, and had another lucky break—the creator, Katie, was in fact Richard's daughter. Brenda says that Katie was curious about who was searching for her deceased father.

***"We're committed to connecting people together and this story really tugged on our heartstrings."***

'I was hesitant to tell Katie as I knew it would come as a huge shock to her. With Jeremy and Karen's approval, I told her that her father had a brief encounter with someone in New Zealand in 1980 and a result of that encounter was a son Jeremy, her half-brother.'

As expected, Katie was both surprised and excited. She told Brenda that she lived in Alabama and she had two other sisters, giving Jeremy three newly discovered half-sisters living half a world away.

Jeremy was informed of the good news and an hour later they had connected on Facebook, first the two of them, then more and more family as Katie told her siblings and relatives about him. Jeremy described the first month of contact as 'overwhelming and incredible'.

'I remember being inundated with over 40 friend requests from my new family in the US, and seeing all these messages filled with questions and happiness. It was amazing.'

The family on both sides of the world also marvelled at how similar Jeremy and Richard looked, as photos were shared back and forth. There was also a strong feeling of sadness from the US-based relatives in finding out that Jeremy had spent his life not knowing his father.

Fast-forward five months and Jeremy and Karen were flying to the United States to meet the extended Chaney family in person, as part of celebrating Jeremy's 37th birthday. As they landed at the airport in Memphis, Tennessee, they were greeted by 'a very vocal' welcoming party armed with flowers and balloons.

The following week was a whirlwind of introductions and socialising, as Jeremy was introduced to dozens of new relatives, and heard stories about his father growing up. Jeremy says he felt an instant connection. 'It felt like we'd all known each other forever.'

At the event, his new family presented him with a heart-warming birthday gift; his father's bomber jacket from his military days. He was also given an album—in the style of 'This is your Life'—containing photos of Richard growing up.

In return, Jeremy showed them a short film he'd put together, showing what his life was like in New Zealand and detailing local quirks such as washing lines, pineapple lumps and peanut slabs.

Today, the bond between Jeremy and his new family is stronger than ever. He is in regular contact with his half-sisters and other US-based relatives, while Karen Skypes the grandparents every weekend. While Karen jokes that 'our Christmas and birthday card list has grown substantially', Jeremy is more philosophical about the changes in his life.

'I never grew up with siblings, and now that I have them it's great and I would do anything for them. It's also been very cool to become an uncle overnight, something I never thought I'd be.'

Jeremy is grateful to The Salvation Army for the role they played to reuniting him with a family he never knew he had.

'I thank them because in my eyes, it's The Salvation Army and their influence and reach, their ability to get access to records that civilians couldn't, that resulted in us all finding each other.'

Karen says their world changed forever on 8th May 2017, when Brenda and the Army gave them the good news.

'I always thought the Sallies did good work in the community and we had used their family stores in the past, but they do so many other great things to help people. We've so thankful for Brenda's help in bringing us together.'

► [Read Jeremy's full story at \*salvationarmy.org.nz/together\*](https://salvationarmy.org.nz/together)

▼ JEREMY WITH HIS FATHER'S MILITARY PHOTO





▲ (FROM LEFT) STACIE AND CHILDREN WITH LIEUTENANT EMMA HOWAN



## From Our Public Relations Director

**As we begin to navigate our way through another busy year with our eyes focussed on the future, it's important for us all to also look back on our many successes in 2017.**

In helping over 120,000 Kiwis last year, we worked hard to help meet the growing needs that people living in poverty face—providing food, shelter, guidance and support to those who need it most.

Fittingly, the theme of this edition of *Together* is 'past, present and future', focussing on both a client's journey from a dark or challenging past and into a better, brighter future—with our help.

We meet Jeremy, who thanks to the Army's Family Tracing Service was able to get answers to some long-term questions relating to his father—and was introduced to a whole new family of aunties, uncles and cousins as a result.

We speak with Alex in Auckland, who we 'rescued' from tortuous living conditions so he could live out his final days in relative comfort.

And we examine how The Salvation Army is helping people to look forward to a better future, from back-to-school support for Kiwi families living in poverty, to providing specialist support to Māori women who feel they have lost all hope.

As I've learned over the years, the idea of 'past, present and future' is also a big factor when it comes to why our donors choose to support The Salvation Army. Some donors support our work because the Army supported their grandparents or other family in World War I and II, while others see the urgent support needed today that we give to people like Alex.

And many support us because of the long-term work we do to turn people's lives around, lifting them up out of poverty and helping them to stay out.

This will be my last *Together* newsletter as PR Director for The Salvation Army. Thank you for your generous support during this time, it has been fantastic to see the positive difference that together we've been able to make in the community.

**Shane Chisholm**  
Public Relations Director  
The Salvation Army

## Care at Christmas

**Last year, The Salvation Army helped over 17,000 families over the Christmas period with a range of social services and practical aid—helping people make it through a busy time and giving them hope for the future.**

**Stacie tells us in her own words about what this support meant to her and her young family.**

My name is Stacie, I'm a solo mum living in Timaru with my four children. It's not easy raising my kids by myself, having four children can get really expensive and Christmas is often a stressful and hard time for us.

I had been working with The Salvation Army and my social worker said that because of my situation and the progress I'd been making, I would be eligible to receive some Christmas support from the Army.

We'd never received a food parcel or any help at Christmas before, so this was a much-needed boost.

The team at Timaru Salvation Army were so kind and supportive. I received a Christmas food hamper with a fresh chicken, vegetables and gifts for all the kids—things that I really couldn't afford to buy myself, as much as I wanted to.

It was really special to be able to celebrate Christmas in a positive way with my kids, it made me feel awesome to have a nice family lunch with them.

I'm now looking forward to what this year will bring for us instead of worrying about it—having support like that makes me want to strive to do better for me and my family.

The Sallies do such good work for people in need, both here in Timaru and around the country. I wanted to give back so I'm volunteering with the Army now and it's been great, they're good people.

**The Salvation Army is only able to provide this type of life-changing help to those in need because of your support, so thank you.**

**“The Salvation Army gave me a place where I could sleep without fear, so I have no words to say how grateful I am to them for it.”**



▲ ALEX IN HIS SOCIAL HOUSING UNIT

## A Room with a View

**The view Alex looks out onto today is in stark contrast to his previous accommodation—a small, windowless basement without room to even stand up straight.**

Alex's journey began in 2004 when he moved to New Zealand from his native Brazil, keen to experience this country's culture and fauna. He immediately felt at home in New Zealand, with the friendly and engaging locals a stark contrast to his old life in São Paulo.

He was able to find employment as a tiler, and he quickly developed a unique talent for fixing tiling imperfections back to near-new condition, which saw Alex in solid demand in the building industry. He also enjoyed exploring the New Zealand landscape, taking photos of its native birds, insects and fauna, which quickly became a passion of his.

***“Living in a dark, cold basement with no windows took a great toll on me, mentally and emotionally.”***

After receiving permanent residency in 2011, Alex moved to Auckland where he rented a bedroom in a family home and worked out of the garage. Then the unthinkable happened.

In early 2015 Alex started to develop ‘tingling’ on the right side of his body. He saw the doctor, but the issue—brain cancer—wasn't detected until he had an MRI scan a few weeks later. This delay cost Alex valuable time and resulted in permanent partial movement loss on his right-hand-side. Doctors gave him two years to live.

The news was devastating for Alex, who had been fit and healthy all his life. Following chemotherapy and radiotherapy, the cancer was held in check—but the permanent damage his body had suffered rendered Alex unable to work. ‘I tried to go back to doing my old job,

which I loved, but my body betrayed me. I didn't have the strength to even pick up tools anymore.’

With no income Alex was forced to eat into his savings, and he relied heavily on support from Work & Income and Leukaemia & Blood Cancer NZ. After several months in hospital, Alex was discharged and returned home. But then another setback—the family Alex lived with asked him to leave, as they needed the room he was staying in.

He was forced to look for accommodation options within his meagre income, which were few and far between, as many landlords were wary of signing on a tenant with serious health issues. Eventually he settled on the only housing he could find, a tiny basement below an old house. Alex described the basement as ‘appalling’.

‘It was three metres squared, with no windows, natural light or even a lock on the door. The ceiling was so low that I had to hunch over just to walk around inside, and I had to knock on the upstairs door to use the bathroom.’

Alex says this was an extremely unsettling time in his life. ‘Living in a dark, cold basement with no windows took a great toll on me, mentally and emotionally.’

An independent person by nature, Alex knew he needed help. He reached out to The Ministry of Social Development to be placed on the Social Housing Register. But despite Alex being on the register fast-track due to his health, the housing crisis in Auckland meant he was in for a long wait.

After almost a year of living in the basement, The Salvation Army stepped in and was able to find suitable accommodation for Alex. He was introduced to Majors Harold & June Robertson, who worked as mission & tenant support officers for the Army, and they set him up in an Army-owned social housing unit in Sunnyvale.

The subsidised rent meant that Alex could afford to live there within his budget, with Harold and June regularly visiting him to provide both support and companionship.

In the first few weeks after moving into the unit, Alex says he struggled to believe that he'd been 'rescued' from the basement—that he'd wake up and it'd all been a dream.

'I would think that any minute, someone was going to knock on my door and say "sorry we've made a mistake, you'll have to move out" so I found it a little hard to relax at first.

'It was only after I asked Harold how long I could live in the unit for, and Harold said "Alex, you can stay here forever" that I started to feel like I truly belonged here.'

Salvation Army social housing national director Greg Foster says that Alex's situation is indicative of a growing trend the Army is responding to in New Zealand, that of helping people older than 55 who cannot afford to rent or buy property. He says there is a demographic change taking place in this country.

'More and more baby boomers are hitting retirement age. With the number of people who don't own homes, as they

age and are still renting, they may not have the means to actually rent in the private sector anymore.'

A year on from moving into the unit, Alex knows 'forever' may not in fact be that long for him. He jokes that he's living 'in overtime', but is content to live a simple life.

'I am happy to live one day at a time—New Zealand is a great place to live, and I think it'll be a great place to die too.'

Alex would love to get back into wildlife photography again, but limited funds and mobility prevent him from doing this. Instead he is content to watch the birds from the window of his unit and look at his old photos. He says that The Salvation Army was 'a great surprise in my life' at a time when he needed help the most.

'The Salvation Army gave me a place where I could sleep without fear, so I have no words to say how grateful I am to them. I lost lots of good stuff in my life because of this condition, but the Army gave me a place to live out my days with dignity—it changed my life.'

► [Read Alex's full story at \*salvationarmy.org.nz/together\*](http://salvationarmy.org.nz/together)

## A Child's New Start

**For many Kiwi children, the start of a new year can be a busy and unsettling time as they prepare for school.**

Now imagine being one of the thousands of families in New Zealand who are living day-to-day in poverty, for whom a new school year means extra costs they cannot afford—bringing additional stress to a family already on the edge.

Wellington solo mum Liana\* says that she dreads the start of the year when it comes to back-to-school costs.

'Even a second-hand uniform can cost over a hundred dollars, and when you include things like stationery, school fees and supplies it quickly begins to skyrocket.

'Even with me working full-time, it can be a daily struggle to house, clothe and feed my kids. It's incredibly stressful.'

Liana sought help from The Salvation Army in Wellington, who provided urgent assistance in the form of food parcels and clothing to help meet her children's needs.

She says the food gave her household budget a temporary 'break' so that she could afford her daughter's school fees.

The Salvation Army's head of welfare services, Major Pam Waugh, says that for a child to have the best chance at learning, they need to have the right opportunities, the right environment and the right learning tools. Social exclusion can also be a big barrier to a child's growth.

'It's so important for children to be able to fit in with their peers at school, to have that social interaction to help keep them safe, happy and motivated.'

Over the past 10 years, the cost of a 'free' state education has risen over 13%, with latest figures showing New Zealand families spend on average \$38,227 per child on school costs.

\* Client's name has been changed to protect their privacy



**Please support our 2018 'Back to school' Together Appeal. Here's how your donation can help Kiwi families in need:**

- Helping to provide school essentials to a child who would otherwise go without
- Giving parents the skills they need to manage their household through budgeting and parenting sessions
- Providing urgent food support and practical aid to families in poverty, so they can provide for their children.

Donate now by completing the donation form attached to your letter or donate online at [salvationarmy.org.nz](http://salvationarmy.org.nz)



## Reclaiming Mana for Māori Women

**A new initiative is set to have a major impact on Māori women who come to The Salvation Army for help turning their lives around.**

The Māori Women's Positive Lifestyle Programme (PLP) will launch in April this year, as the first programme of its kind in New Zealand targeting Māori mothers in need. The Salvation Army's head of welfare services, Major Pam Waugh, says that it's a sad fact that Māori women—particularly parents—are over-represented in the Army's welfare statistics and as victims in society.

'Māori women are over-represented in domestic violence, poverty, homelessness and mental health statistics in New Zealand, but to date no specific programme exists to meet the unique needs of this demographic. This programme will address a previously unmet need.'

***“We're looking forward to seeing the long-reaching impact this programme has for participants, their whānau and the community they live in.”***

The Māori Women's PLP will focus on Māori women aged in their 20's to 50's, particularly those with children. It will run in six centres across four communities—Whangārei, Auckland, Waikato and Wellington—where Māori women typically make up 46 to 75 percent of Army clients.

The programme will be based on the highly successful PLP programme that The Salvation Army has run in New Zealand communities over the past 15 years, which uses trained facilitators and resources to deliver lasting change for women. Major Waugh says the new programme will

focus on being culturally appropriate to Māori women.

'The goal is for the courses to develop and strengthen the mana and physical, emotional and family health of almost 400 Māori women as nurturers and leaders within their own whānau and the wider community, using a marae-based learning environment and facilitated group interactions based on culture, te reo, traditions, life experiences, knowledge and skills of the participants and facilitators.'

Each client will attend weekly two-hour sessions with a facilitator and other participants to explore and evaluate their personal experiences in relation to specific topics and to take responsibility for their own actions.

Following the programme, year-long follow-up support in the form of home visits, phone calls and welfare support, will be in place to help ensure the changes the participants have made in their lives are firmly embedded.

Salvation Army national practice manager, Jono Bell, says that it will be exciting to test the proven methodology of the PLP in a more relevant and targeted way for clients.

'We're looking forward to seeing the long-reaching impact this programme has for participants, their whānau and the community they live in.'

Johnson and Johnson have been generous in providing funding through their Community Impact Programme, which will help fund the trial across six centres for the next three years.

Additional funding is also being sought, which would allow The Salvation Army to expand the programme into other high-deprivation communities where the need for this type of programme is also great.