

FEATURE

Chronic school refusal

FAITH TALK

Running on empty

MY STORY

A journey to renewal

Navigating back-to-school stress

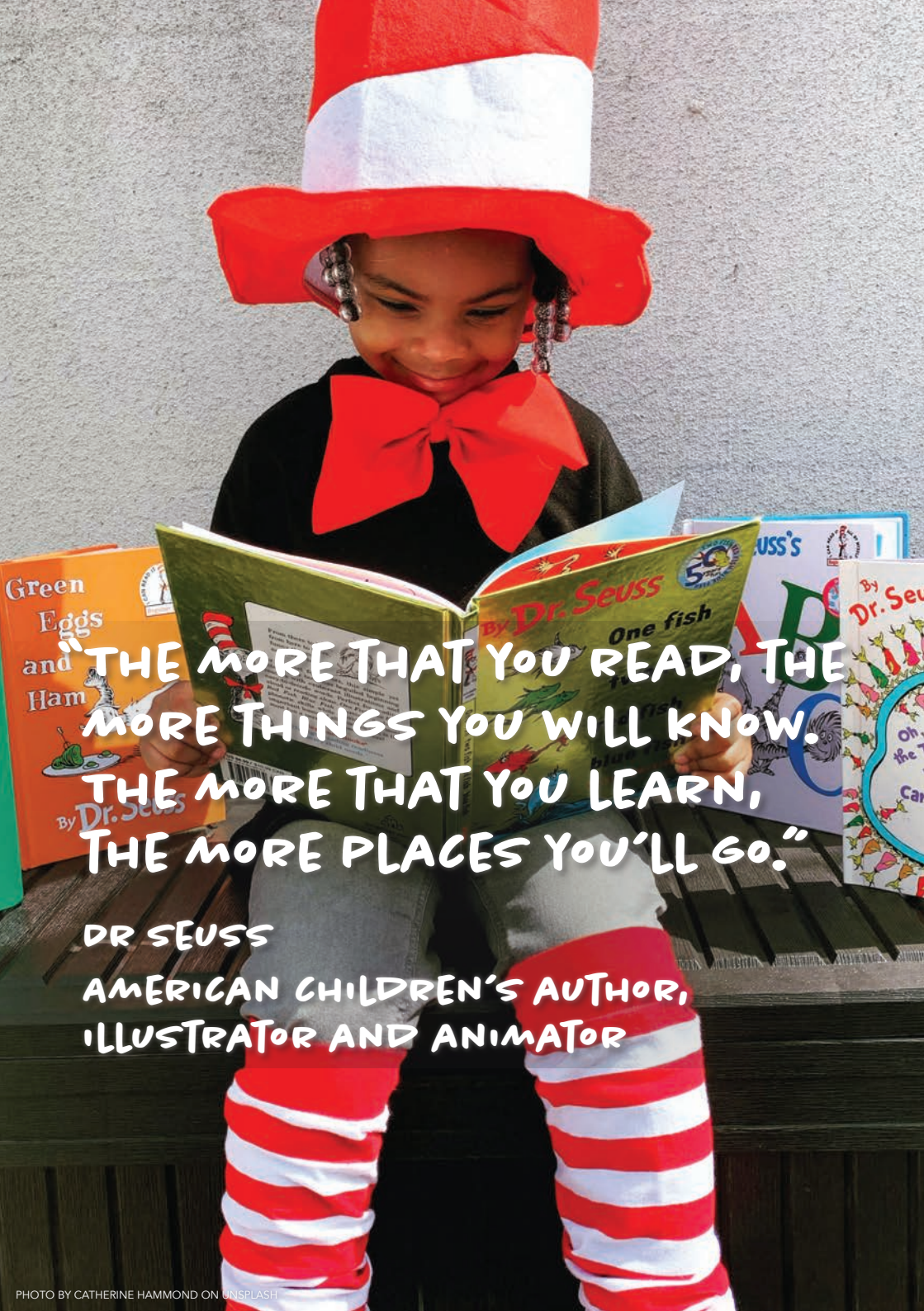
Encourage, support and celebrate your kids!



SALVOS

MAGAZINE





**"THE MORE THAT YOU READ, THE
MORE THINGS YOU WILL KNOW.
THE MORE THAT YOU LEARN,
THE MORE PLACES YOU'LL GO."**

**DR SEUSS
AMERICAN CHILDREN'S AUTHOR,
ILLUSTRATOR AND ANIMATOR**



The Salvation Army is about giving hope where it's needed most.

What is The Salvation Army?

The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church.

Vision Statement

Wherever there is hardship or injustice, Salvos will live, love and fight alongside others to transform Australia one life at a time with the love of Jesus.

Mission Statement

The Salvation Army is a Christian movement dedicated to sharing the love of Jesus by:

- Caring for people
- Creating faith pathways
- Building healthy communities
- Working for justice

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Back to school

Christmas and welcoming in what we hope will be a happier and healthier new year for everyone, has come and gone so quickly. As many of us take a holiday break this month, others are gearing up for the start of a new school year.

In this edition, we feature some tips and 'words of wisdom' from parents whose children are returning to school, and others who have already shared the education journey with their kids. A recent Year 12 graduate, Zoe, also has some tips for students in their senior years.

The school years are often difficult for many students, with those struggling with anxiety and depression needing particular help and support. Jessica Morris shares her own mental health journey through those years, and shares how parents and schools can assist students trying to navigate their way through.

For those of us 'running on empty' in different ways, Rebecca Moore in Faith Talk writes about a source of strength and support that will never let us down.

For all these stories and more, go to salvosmagazine.org.au

Simone Worthing **Assistant Editor**

Back-to-school tips

Encourage, support and celebrate your kids!

DON'T HAVE A BAD-HAIR DAY

My best piece of advice is for boys: Don't let your mum talk you into a haircut the day before going back to school. And if you have no choice, don't let your mum do it.

This advice stems from years of being on the wrong end of the clippers at the wrong time. I am still haunted by memories of being stuck in a long line of sweaty schoolboys waiting for the two-minute 'butcher-cut' by the barber, only for your mum to 'tidy it up' with the kitchen scissors when you got home.



It always ended badly (with the dreaded bowl cut). And then you had to face the standard first-day-back photo on the front verandah and then six hours of relentless ridicule from classmates.

So please, back-to-schoolers, book in your haircut now for mid-January. Give it time to settle. Or you'll have to live with the consequences for many years to come. – **Dean S**

BE INVOLVED IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

My theory always was if you want your kids to have an interest in something, involve yourself in it, too. My wife and I always tried to help out at the school with reading, music, sports days, attending chapel services and concerts – behind the scenes as well as in front.

Same with the swimming club. We just didn't sit in the stands; we did timekeeping, manned the barbecue and tuck shop and did working bees. The footy club, too: umpiring, running water, tuck shop, strapping.

The investment made in them as children has paid off. They had a great school ethic. Now they have a great work ethic. – **Darryl**

BE PREPARED AND GIVE GRACE

As a mum of a child whose firstborn started school in 2020, here are my tips:

- Go shoe shopping in mid-January. The closer to the start of school, the busier it gets.
- Buy contact paper early!
- Take it slow. Give yourself plenty of grace to get into a new rhythm. Don't overload your week with lots of activities or weekend adventures.
- Be prepared for emotions. Day one, your child may skip into school and then two weeks later they'll be clinging to your leg and crying. That's okay. Give it



PHOTO BY JULY BRENDA GONZALES CALLAPAZA ON UNSPLASH

time and your child will adjust.

- Fill up the freezer with homemade lunchbox-friendly snacks toward the end of the school holidays.
- Do 'lunchbox' practice with your child to try and gauge how much they *really* eat. Concentrate on small portions, ensure containers are easy to open and food is easy to eat.
- Think sustainably: try to source a stainless-steel lunchbox and drink bottle for a better environmental and healthy choice.
- Use the last few weeks of the holidays to get organised and establish your routines: regular wake-up and bedtimes, ensuring uniforms fit and are labelled clearly, practise walking to school if it's a new one.
- Allow your child to have some 'down time' after school. – **Julia**

PERSONAL CHEER SQUAD

- School is just not the same as when I was a child. Electronic whiteboards have replaced chalkboards, and tablets used to be what I was given for a headache! School might have changed, but a positive and encouraging adult who believes in the student remains a powerful influence over, not only academic achievements, but all of life. Be your students' cheer squad. Encourage, support, stand alongside of and celebrate even the little accomplishments.
- Worn-out school shoes are signs of a physically active child. Reward them by going outside and playing together.
- There should always be room in a school bag for a ball.
- Success comes from effort.
- Act at school today so that in 10 years' time you look back and say, "They were the best days of my life." – **Dean C**

KEEP IT COOL

I never used to make that much of a big deal about going back to school for my boys. If I downplayed it, they didn't seem to feel any pressure, even when starting at new schools.

- Don't assume school uniforms will still fit for the new school year.
- Get in early to buy all your school supplies.
- Don't load kids down too much with a heavy backpack on day one.
- Make sure you read the 'back to school' notices carefully. ▶



- If your kids are starting at a new school, consider a trial school run the week before school starts. This will help with timing, planning the route and getting the feel of the school grounds ready for those first-day jitters.
- Talk up the first day of school as a new adventure, the opportunity to make new friends and lots of new things to learn.
- Above all, try very hard not to cry. If you think you might feel a bit emotional sending your kids back to school, promise yourself a little 'me' time of coffee, cake – and tissues. – **Carolyn**
- We do all our clothes washing on the weekend and have invested more money into making sure the kids have enough uniforms for the week.
- I set aside time on the weekend to prepare lunchbox food. We have some special dietary requirements, so I make quiches, mini-sausage rolls and sometimes sushi for their lunches. It's then quick and easy to pack in the mornings. We have a 'one packet per day' rule as I don't like single-use packaging and am not a fan of the high sugar and preservative content of most school snack foods. So, we bake our own.

ORGANISATION THROUGH EXAMPLE

We are a family with children at primary school and two parents who work full-time so:

- I get up early to have lunchboxes packed before the kids get up.
- We try to avoid the stress of over-scheduling. We limit after-school activities, and also ensure we have Friday afternoons free for 'chill time' at the end of our busy week.
- My kids often hear me say: "Your lack

of planning is not my emergency.” They know that if they suddenly realise at bedtime about homework due the next day, we are not going to drop everything to get it done. It’s hard sometimes when they are upset, but it teaches them to plan and take responsibility for their workload. – **Lauren**

STAYING CALM IN THE CHAOS

Over the years I tried to be organised, to plan and prepare ahead, to give my children healthy lunches and to volunteer at school when I could. Mostly it worked and sometimes it didn’t, depending on the myriad of factors that make up family and work life.

However, what always worked was staying calm, even when either or both children were stressed or emotional about something, had forgotten an important piece of homework or event, traffic was crawling, or the football game was about to start without them.

I wasn’t 100 per cent successful at staying calm, but when I managed it, the kids calmed down as well, they could think through solutions to whatever the issue was, or just accept what was going to happen and figure out how to best deal with it. This approach definitely helped calm any chaos or confusion, and gave us all a much better start, or finish, to the day. – **Simone**

GET INTO GEAR FOR SENIOR YEARS

I am a recent school-leaver, so my tips are mainly for students doing years 11 and 12. These are my top three pieces of advice based on experience:

- Get your sleep pattern into rhythm at least a week before going back to school. Late nights and long sleep-ins have got



PHOTO BY DEAN SIMPSON

to stop. Have your school routine of early nights and early mornings established before that first day back.

- Don’t check notifications on your phone as you are getting ready for school. It sucks up too much time, you will be rushing around and it will just make you flustered and late for school.
- Put a bit of time and effort into covering your books for the year. You’ve got to look at those dreaded books for a whole year, so decorate them with something that makes you happy. I decorated mine with happy photos of friends, family, pets and happy places I’ve visited. – **Zoe**



Scan here for more on finding meaning.

Confessions of chronic school refusal

Helping anxious students as the start of school approaches

WORDS JESSICA MORRIS

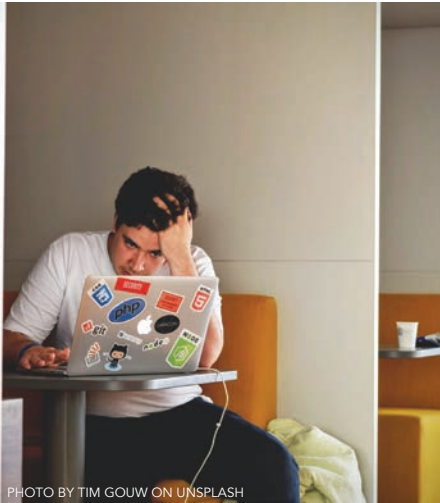


PHOTO BY TIM GOUW ON UNSPLASH

School is almost back! And while parents and guardians may be shouting for joy, some students may not feel the same way. It is normal for a sense of anxiety and fear, or even dread, to come up for some kids and teenagers – and I relate.

My high school years were some of the hardest of my life. Rather than looking forward to seeing my friends every day, I woke up with a ball of elastic in my stomach. I would become physically ill, anxious about my subjects, my appearance, my friends – even the way I breathed.

My anxiety and depression spiralled, and eventually, at the age of 13, I was so bound

by mental illness that I couldn't even get out of bed – let alone attend school. I have a distinct memory of my mother saying that we would go to the doctor for help.

The fact that I did not have to attend school that day has stayed with me. It showed me that my mum didn't see my school refusal as arrogance or laziness, but as a cry for help. In this way, I learned very quickly that my parents' influence and the actions of my teachers had a significant impact on my recovery. And this meant that I was not only able to get better, but also graduate from high school after finally attending school full-time in Year 12.

Some years later, when I worked in a school, I saw some students going through the same struggles. Due to my experience, I learned to support their families rather than judge them for their students' apparent 'sick days'.

If you are a parent, guardian, teacher, or even a friend of a student who also has plenty of 'sick days', then I'd like to give you some hope, or tips, as someone who experienced constant school refusal:

1. LET THE STUDENT KNOW THEIR FEELINGS ARE VALID

Affirm that they are not making it up or over-reacting. And highlight that, while this is not an excuse to miss school long term, you will work together to find new ways to participate in it.



2. DON'T FORCE THEM TO GET TO SCHOOL – WORK TOWARDS A LONG-TERM GOAL WHEN THEY ARE READY FOR IT

This is hard, because there is a fine line between honouring a student's pain and having them regress in their education. It's best to take it on a case-by-case basis. And sometimes, this means readjusting the end goal – shifting subjects, learning a trade or just aiming to pass so they can graduate.

3. REINFORCE EDUCATION AS A HEALTHY ASPECT OF THEIR LIFE

The priority is the student's health, followed by their education. So, as their health improves, set bigger goals regarding school attendance. They need this to reach graduation and mature into adulthood.

4. APPROACH THE SCHOOL AND MAKE THEM AWARE OF THE SITUATION

Teachers, chaplains and social workers are all on hand to help families through this. Tell them about your situation, and ask how they can help. Thanks to my teachers, I never fell

behind at school – they either modified my workload, or I worked from home.

5. SEEK OUTSIDE HELP

While the support of my family and school were fundamental in my recovery, having a counsellor who could support and challenge me was a game changer. As a parent or guardian, you do not have to face this battle alone – so please ask for help.

HELP IS OUT THERE

Beyond Blue **1300 22 4636**

Headspace **1800 650 890**

Kids Helpline **1800 55 1800**

Lifeline **13 11 14**



Scan here for more on finding meaning.

Running on empty

Sometimes being stopped in our tracks is just what we need

WORDS REBECCA MOORE

It was a busy school morning. I managed to get my four children out the door but with only minutes to spare. As we all bundled into the car, I turned the engine on only to have the petrol light appear on my dashboard! The petrol was low – it was very low.

I had two choices. I could stop on the way to school to get petrol, but this would mean the kids would be running late. Or, I could take the risk and drive straight to the school and hope there would be enough petrol to get me there and back.

Time was running short. As I approached a fork in the road, I decided to go left and head straight to the school. We'd had enough late slips in the past, and today was not going to be another one.

We arrived just on time. Breathing a sigh of relief, I waved the children off with a cheery mum smile and drove out of the school car park, giving myself a mental pat on the back. The thought crossed my mind: "Best mum ever!"

As I performed a U-turn to head back to the motorway, something happened. My car stopped midway, leaving me stranded diagonally across the right-hand lane on the bend of a road. "This is awkward," I thought.

As I retrieved my phone to call my husband, some nice people in a car pulled over to help me. Together, we pushed my car to the side of the road and out of harm's way. Not long after

that, my hero-husband arrived with enough petrol to get me to the nearest petrol station.

Sometimes we think we can make it – but on what fuel?

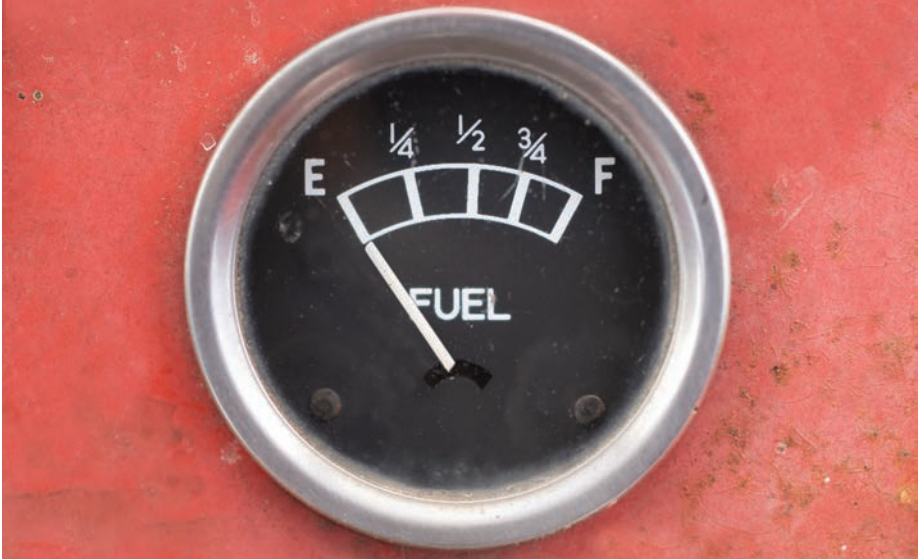
As relieved as I was that the children made it to school on time, I didn't have what I needed to get where I was going. We often think we can make it in our own strength, but when it comes down to it, that will only get us so far. The warning signs were there, and there was a solution that would see me last the distance, but I ignored it and suffered the consequences.

Occasionally in life we push things to the limit when we should, and do, know better. I should have been better prepared. I should have refuelled when the warning light first appeared on my dashboard the day before. I should have pushed the kids out the door 20 minutes earlier. I should have ... I should have ...

There are many things we should have done, and in hindsight it all makes perfect sense. But, in the moment, we're pushed for time, we're distracted by circumstances and we're focused on other things.

LIVING WATER

In the Bible, in John chapter 4, we read about a Samaritan woman who had spent years running from one relationship to another. Rejected by others because of her lifestyle, she collected water from the well at noon,



most likely because not many people would be there at that time. Jesus met her at the well and asked her to pour him a drink.

As it was not appropriate for Jews to associate with Samaritans, she questioned this request. He responded: "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water" (verse 10).

Jesus goes on to explain in verses 13-14: "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

This woman's life was changed from that moment on. It doesn't matter who we are or what we've done, this living water that Jesus offers is for everyone who will take from it.

Sometimes, Jesus can be standing right in front of us, offering springs of living water,

and we don't realise it. We keep going in our own strength, becoming weary until we stop midway in our path, and all along Jesus is asking us to stop and let him give us rest.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew chapter 11, verse 28).

While it was awkward running out of fuel during a U-turn, it could have been a lot worse. God is always looking out for us, and sometimes stopping us in our tracks is exactly what we need.

*Rebecca Moore is a writer who blogs at rebeccamoore.life. She is the author of **First to Forty** and **Pizza and Choir**. Reprinted with permission.*



Scan here for more on finding meaning.

Love and loss unites Kangaroo Valley

A story of renewal

WORDS NAOMI SINGLEHURST

In the picturesque NSW hamlet of Kangaroo Valley, a stunning river creates an idyllic backdrop for both locals and tourists who flock to the area over the summer.

However, just over one year ago, on Christmas and Boxing Day 2019, there was smoke in the air, the bush was tinder dry and concern was growing about the huge Currowan fire front that was inching north.

Laura and her husband Scott – together with their adult children and families, spent a hot but enjoyable family Christmas together in their beloved Kangaroo Valley house, ‘Burrawang’.

As the family was packing up on Boxing Day to head off for a coastal break, Scott suggested they pack some photographs and other precious items as a precaution.

“We almost felt sheepish driving away with all this stuff, thinking in a few weeks we would just be carting it back again,” Laura recalls, saying the family never dreamed fire would directly affect their sandstone home.

By early January, the Currowan fire – which had started near Batemans Bay in late November and eventually burnt about 500,000 hectares and destroyed more than 300 homes – had reached the Shoalhaven region and the township of Kangaroo Valley came under threat.

Laura explains: “Scott wanted to head back



Two members of Laura's family with the few items remaining after the bushfire.

but our friend, who rents a small cottage from us on the property, said no. Visibility was almost zero and access to Kangaroo Valley was through bush both ways. He said he'd turn on the roof sprinkler system if needed.”

On 4 January 2020, a southerly change diverted the fire away from the main town centre, but, sadly, Burrawang was in the fire's path and was reduced to ashes.

Laura says: “Our friend left in time, thank goodness. If Scott had gone down, maybe with our son, there is a very good chance they would not be here today.”

DEVASTATION

Laura says the family was in shock when they

returned home. "There was nothing left standing, not a blade of grass. It was an unbelievable sight ... no house, a few plates in the rubble. The sheds were just little piles of molten nothing," she says. "There was no sign of life. It was so quiet – no birds – an awful choking smell."

Laura says she and the family also felt "incredibly lucky" and, with fires blazing all over the state and country, she felt she had "to do something". So she started a fundraising page.

She explains: "The Salvos were the best way to do it, we thought. We nominated The Salvation Army Bushfire Disaster Appeal as our charity, as they were already on the front-line assisting volunteer firefighters and those who have lost their homes and loved ones."

With huge support from family and friends, Laura had initially hoped to raise "maybe \$5000", but was surprised and delighted to raise over \$127,000.

POST-FIRE CARE

A group of passionate Kangaroo Valley locals set up their own drop-in centre – with food, clothes, pet feed and more.

Laura contacted the Salvos to let them know about the funds. Laura also asked if some help could possibly come to Kangaroo Valley.

In response, the Salvos organised for Lieutenant-Colonel John Hodge, a retired Salvos officer (pastor), to travel to Kangaroo Valley to train existing volunteers [in dispersing funds]. The Salvos also covered some of the rent for the drop-in centre.

"Kangaroo Valley is a beautiful, tight-knit community and one of the advantages of that little neighbourhood centre was that they were not only giving out material help but



Laura and her family lost their home in Kangaroo Valley when bushfires hit in the summer of 2019-20.

also sharing friendship and a listening ear. It was lovely," says John.

Over three days, as well as training volunteers, including a team from Canberra, John was able to organise \$80,000 of immediate assistance for fire-affected locals.

RECOVERING SLOWLY

John says January 2020 was a sobering post-Christmas period for many.

For Laura, the regeneration of nature and generosity of others has given great comfort. "Within days we saw signs of life," she says. "The initial shock, horror, sadness and crying all the time, soon gave way to absolute fascination as to how the bush has regenerated. And now birds are back. It is very heart-warming."

Naomi Singlehurst is Content Specialist - Mission, for The Salvation Army



Scan here for more on disasters and emergencies.

Banana chocolate muffins



Ingredients

2 cups self-raising flour
 50g butter
 ½ cup sugar
 ½ cup chopped chocolate or chocolate chips
 2 ripe bananas
 ¾ cup milk

Method

Sift flour into bowl and rub in butter until mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. Stir in sugar and chocolate. Mash and add bananas. Stir in milk.

Spoon into greased muffin pan and bake at 180°C for 20-25 minutes.

Note: Dates or walnuts can be used instead of chocolate.

Muffins freeze well for school lunches.

Funny things kids say



PHOTO BY BIRMINGHAM MUSEUMS TRUST ON UNSPLASH

I wrote this on the whiteboard during discussion: William Shakespeare (1564-1616) – and a student asked me, “Is that Shakespeare’s real phone number?”

“If you forget how old you are, you can always look at the back of your T-shirt. Mine says five to six.”

“In my heart I’m still little.”

Bible byte

“Wise men and women are always learning, always listening for fresh insights.”
 Proverbs chapter 18 verse 15
The Message translation

Wordsearch

G Y V F I N B K L F B G E K G
 U R W P R P O E R J O N M N N
 I A A Z E P A I Y O O I P O I
 D M T Y G R E R T C K R A W L
 A I U Y N N A S Y A S O T L O
 N R E I D I U R Y Y C T H E O
 C P N S T P A X G B R U Y D H
 E G H R P D U P B R V T D G C
 S I E L N U R T U R I N G E S
 P T I O T E A M W O R K F W F
 M E C Y C A R E T I L F O U Q
 S E Z N O V I R T U A L N G W
 S C S N W E C N E D I F N O C
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 G N I H C A E T D E V I C E S

- | | |
|------------|-----------|
| BOOKS | NURTURING |
| CONFIDENCE | PRIMARY |
| DEVICES | READING |
| EDUCATION | SCHOOLING |
| EMPATHY | SECONDARY |
| FRIENDSHIP | SUPPLIES |
| FUN | TEACHING |
| GUIDANCE | TEAMWORK |
| KNOWLEDGE | TERTIARY |
| LEARNING | TUTORING |
| LITERACY | VIRTUAL |

Quick quiz



PHOTO BY ELEMENTS DIGITAL ON UNSPLASH

1. How many students are enrolled in schools across Australia?*
2. In how many schools are they enrolled?
3. What type of schools hold the greatest share of enrolments?
4. Which state or territory has the highest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students?
5. How many primary school and secondary school teachers are there in Australia?

Tum-Tum



On which page of this week's *Salvos Magazine* is Tum-Tum hiding?

Answers: 1. 3,948,811 (*2019 statistics) 2. 9,503
 3. Government schools (65.7%) 4. Northern Territory (39.1%)
 5. 149,462 and 138,832.
Tum-Tum: is poking out from a backpack on page 6.

Did you know?

- The Canary Islands are named after dogs, not birds.
- It's illegal to sell night-time photos of the Eiffel Tower.
- The Vatican's ATMs are in Latin.



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MAGAZINE



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This mobile site features a range of articles and videos about the work and services of the Salvos, as well as personal stories and reflections.

The site can also help you connect with one or more of our social services. We can assist in many areas – from financial stress and homelessness, to addiction and family violence – and offer hope to those struggling for meaning and purpose in life.

Each service provides a variety of ways to get in touch and receive the help you need. We are here for you.

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