

salvos

magazine

Shadows of loneliness

Overcoming the isolation
epidemic plaguing our youth



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FEATURE

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regional
families

FAITH TALK

Our
need for
connection

MY STORY

The humble
cheese
toastie

"FRIENDSHIP IS BORN AT
THAT MOMENT WHEN ONE
PERSON SAYS TO ANOTHER,
'WHAT! YOU TOO?
I THOUGHT I WAS
THE ONLY ONE.'"

— C S LEWIS





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



The Salvation Army Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet and work and pay our respect to Elders, past, present, and future. We value and include people of all cultures, languages, abilities, sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, and intersex status. We are committed to providing programs that are fully inclusive. We are committed to the safety and well-being of people of all ages, particularly children.

Salvos Magazine

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Creating community

Social isolation and loneliness have been issues in Australia for many years and were only exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies show that 55 per cent of Australians have experienced loneliness since the start of the pandemic in 2020. Disadvantage also contributes to social isolation and loneliness.

In this edition, Lerrisse Smith explores loneliness among youth, and how some isolated young people are creating their own communities where they feel valued, safe and accepted.

Our writers also highlight a handful of Salvos programs that help bring isolated people together for support, skill development, friendship and community. These include a parenting centre, coffee and toasties drop-in, and a homelessness service in Perth.

A different look at a buzzing food court is the focus of Faith Talk, where Pete Brookshaw writes about the non-discriminatory nature of loneliness and how, even in a crowd, people can feel isolated and empty. He explains that friendship is an answer to loneliness, that God calls us his friends, and that each of us can experience friendship with him.

Simone Worthing **Editor**

Shadows of Loneliness

Overcoming the isolation epidemic plaguing our youth

By Lerrisse Smith

It was a headline that captured the world's attention.

In January 2018, Great Britain made political history by appointing the world's first Minister for Loneliness, a move described by then Prime Minister Theresa May as reflecting the "sad reality of modern life".

Loneliness has since become a prominent topic in the news, with the World Health Organisation declaring it a pressing global health threat and United States Surgeon General Dr Vivek Murthy equating its mortality effects to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

And it's significantly impacting our young people.

They are becoming lonelier, according to the latest Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey that reported Australians aged 15 to 24 are the loneliest age group in the country.



ONLINE IMPACT

"Young people don't really talk about loneliness, but you see it and hear it in other ways," says Rachel Munro, Youth Participation Worker with The Salvation Army's Youth Services.

"What did you do on the weekend?" and they will reply "Nothing really. Just watched some movies, went on TikTok." "Who else have you talked to about this?" Their reply, "No one. Who would I tell?"

For many young people, loneliness exists even when they are in a crowd.

Recent research conducted by the Melbourne Youth Services program, utilising the DeJong Loneliness Scale, revealed that young people often feel they lack someone trustworthy to confide in or talk with about everyday issues, even with friends and acquaintances in their lives.

Post-COVID, the team has noticed a real change in the social skills of the young people coming through its refuge.

"In communal spaces, they are more likely to be glued to their phones than ever before and often talk more to the workers than other young people," Rachel explains.

"For many, the critical years for social development, where they would have been with peers in classrooms, sporting teams or enjoying other hobbies with friends, was spent online."



Youth Services Program Manager Claire Edmanson says a change in lifestyle and lockdowns had limited young people's interactions, resulting in lost opportunities for social connection and increased loneliness and social anxiety.

“

The main way to prevent loneliness is to help young people create the community they want for themselves.

”

SOCIAL SUPPORT

She emphasises the importance of valuing youth in society and ensuring they had a voice and role in addressing their community needs.

A key component of the youth services work was also centred on relationships and social supports for young people,

especially when family support was lacking.

While feeling rejected and lonely is an experience all teenagers have occasionally, the Youth Services team based in Upton Road, St Kilda, has found they often don't have families to fall back on.

When the young people using its service have friendship conflict, they often don't have someone to help them workshop a solution or to explain what a healthy relationship looks like.

CYCLE OF FRIENDS

Another presentation of loneliness the workers often see is young people cycling through friendships, never keeping a friend for more than a few weeks or a month at a time.

“As a program, we operate as a PIE (Psychologically Informed Environment), which has a focus on building trusting, responsive and supportive relationships within safe environments,” Rachel says.

“What we have seen in our program that has improved these experiences is creating a space for young people to socialise in a safe and supported environment. ▶

This year's annual Salvation Army Red Shield Research project exploring people's experiences of hardship found 60% of respondents aged over 18 cited loneliness and social isolation as a great challenge during the past year, with 62% often feeling lonely. These feelings often coincided with poorer mental health outcomes. Many respondents also highlighted how their financial situation greatly increased their social isolation and loneliness.



Through activities such as laser tag, group walks and our weekly gardening program, which are led by staff, young people can interact with one another without the focus being solely on 'making friends'."

Through monthly food markets, they can have brief interactions with community members and further develop their social skills with a range of different people.

At community dinners, residents can reconnect after leaving the program, allowing young people to maintain the friendships they have formed, even if they're no longer living in the same area.

"I was talking to a young person the other day who has been in the program for over a year now and regularly comes back to our services in Upton Road for social events," Rachel says.

"They were reflecting on the situation with their family, who they have cut contact with due to family violence. They said, "I don't talk to my family anymore but that's okay. I have Liam* (a friend they made through the program) and I have everyone at Upton Road.

"I believe the main way to prevent loneliness is to help young people create the community they want for themselves."

The 2023 State of the Nation Report on Social Connection in Australia revealed young people aged 18-24 reported the highest levels of loneliness and were at the highest risk of persistent loneliness.

TIPS TO TACKLE LONELINESS

- Reach out to safe people in your life
- Seek out others who share your pursuits
- Connect with your community to discover available activities and resources
- If community youth activities/resources are lacking, talk with local councils/organisations
- Connect with people face-to-face
- Phone someone you know or haven't spoken to in a while for a real conversation



Scan here for more stories of hope.

Regional care for isolated mums

When mothers are really struggling – whether with handling their children’s needs or managing their own isolation in parenthood – who cares for them?

To reach out to their local community, the Salvos in Ballarat, Victoria, run a Family Connections parenting centre that offers up to eight free groups and programs for parents and children.

The centre seeks to equip mothers of children and teenagers of all ages and provide social connections.

Alison Ford, a Family and Children’s Facilitator there, said Family Connections had grown into an extremely busy, energetic and responsive initiative that reached members of the community who might otherwise remain isolated.

LINKS FOR FAMILIES

One of the programs, Sing Play Move, is a play-based musical immersion program for babies and toddlers offered as a partnership between Family Connections and CocoSounds. The chaplain from Karinya Support Services attends and can link interested families with nearby Delacombe Salvos.

Alison said the families have created community and support networks within the Sing Play Move group, with regular clothing and produce swaps. “It is beautiful to watch these families come together from the newborn stage to the preschool years,” she said.



“There’s so many families out there doing it alone when they don’t need to.”

A mother who attends the program, Michelle (name has been changed), said she had been recommending Sing Play Move to other parents. “My toddler and I look forward to [it] each week,” she said. “It’s a fun place where we always feel welcome. My toddler can go between listening and participating to free play without judgement. Alison and all the other volunteers are so helpful and friendly, and through them, we’ve been linked into other programs.”

Education, assistance and a safe place for parents with children with disabilities is also available, as well as for those facing challenges around cost of living, family violence and teenagers dabbling in illegal, violent or destructive behaviour. – **Kirralee Nicolle**

Local connections: Check out your closest Salvos for information on local activities for parents and children, or go to salvos.org.au for contact details.

Goldfields host free dental clinic

The Salvation Army in the Western Australian Goldfields city of Kalgoorlie/ Boulder hosted a free dental clinic in September to help people who cannot afford to visit the dentist.

"It all started with an email from Ninga Mia Fellowship church [in Kalgoorlie] requesting the use of a church building to accommodate a free dental clinic provided by a team from the Tzu Chi Buddhist volunteer dental team," said Salvos corps officer (pastor) Major Shirley Spooner.

"The weekend was particularly hoping to help children and adults living in poverty and First Nations people."

Dentists, clinical staff and volunteers came from Perth and Brisbane, with the local Goldfields Family Dental team providing their mobile dental clinic.

About 80 people were assisted, with 241 procedures and basic health assessments. Specialists available were doctors and nurses, a physiotherapist, a pharmacist, a maxillofacial surgeon, a paediatrician and a neonatal nurse.

"Overall, this was an amazing partnership that truly blessed our local community," Shirley said. "We are hoping this will be an annual event which we gladly and proudly support." – **Anthony Castle**

Salvos support Deaf Basketball

The Asia-Pacific Deaf Basketball Championships (APDBC), held during International Week of the Deaf (20-26 September), was a great success, with the Australian men's team winning gold and the women's team being awarded silver medals.

The Salvos helped support the Melbourne event with Major Charlie Jacobsen's involvement on the Expression Australia's Community Advisory Group.

Charlie, who is also deaf [known as 'Little d' (born hearing)], said it was an amazing event. "Congratulations to all players from the countries for their hard



Charlie, centre, with event officials and participants.

work and determination throughout the tournament," he said.

The APDBC involved six countries: Australia, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Japan, Mongolia and the Philippines.

Kingston City Salvos also provided a commuter bus and donated six boxes of new sports socks for the basketballers.

– **Lerisse Smith**



Thumbs up to debt-busting program

Gary, a client of The Beacon accommodation facility in Perth, has become the first resident to 'write off' their court fines after registering for the Work Development Permit (WDP) Scheme.

"This means everything to me," an elated Gary said. "It has given me a clean slate and fresh start, with no debt."

The Beacon is a 102-bed accommodation facility for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness. It provides client-centred, trauma-informed case management and a comprehensive range of services.

Gary has also transitioned into shared housing in the community.

"With the support of my case worker Ben and all the services here at The Beacon, I've secured permanent accommodation, something I didn't think was possible a few short months ago," Gary says. "I will be able to use the skills I've learnt here for the rest of my life."



Gary is now debt-free after working off his court fine.

The Beacon is The Salvation Army's largest residential homelessness facility in Australia. Clients can work off court fines by actively engaging in onsite case management and financial counselling and by attending Restorative Lifestyle Program (RLP) electives.

"The Department of Justice Western Australia WDP Scheme provides clients with opportunities to work off their court fines," says The Beacon centre manager, Karen Coetzee.

"Being able to not only assist clients to address the issues that have contributed to their homelessness but also to enable them to positively exit our facility into the community, debt free, is life transformational." – **Anthony Castle**



The Beacon offers a range of homelessness support.



Scan here for more information on Salvation Army Homelessness support and services.

The lonely food court

Our deep need for connection

By Peter Brookshaw

The food court is buzzing. Parents are watching their young kids run around, testing out the fancy new indoor play area. The line for a McDonald's lunch is winding around the corner. You can smell the beef vindaloo and steaming garlic naan bread from the Indian store. In the distance you can hear the grinding of coffee beans, where the large soy latte is about to be poured. A man carefully places his wheelchair into position under one of the café benches. He's about to have a large sausage roll with one of those tiny little squeeze sauces. The self-serve Singapore noodles seem to be a hit.

The food court is buzzing.

“

Loneliness does not discriminate.

”

LONELY IN A CROWD

Then it hit me. A sense of loneliness came over me as I sat in the bustling food court. My heart felt sad. I was alone. How could I possibly be surrounded by so much activity, yet still feel so lonely?

As I began to look around, I noticed there were many busy people with their laptops, customers eating their lunches and lots of noise, but there was a significant lack of one thing: a deepening of

friendships. Everything I've described above sounds like the community getting together and connecting but let me describe the picture a little differently.

The food court is buzzing. Parents watching their kids run around are hoping at some point they might find a group of parents that they could chat with. The 18-year-old boy is lining up for McDonald's, but his so-called real mates left him high-and-dry as they went to the cinemas without him. The beef vindaloo and garlic naan bread are cooking and all seems well, but deep down the owner is struggling to pay the exorbitant rents while customers whine about paying \$15 for a homemade curry. The coffee beans are being ground because a middle-aged man is ordering a large coffee so he can try to churn through 120 emails. He has a deep sense of loneliness that no one understands because no one appreciates the pressure he's under. The man in the wheelchair is ready to have his sausage roll. He's hoping it'll help him gain enough optimism to get through the afternoon, as he deals with chronic pain and a carer who only visits twice a week. The self-serve Chinese is always busy, and today, a lady named Cho is preparing to sit by herself and contemplate life.

Loneliness does not discriminate.

Whether you're rich or poor, young or old, anyone can experience loneliness. I've felt it before. And sitting in a food court of all places. The place is busy, but no one is talking to me. No one is



reaching out to see if I'm okay. Everyone is running around and ticking things off their to-do list, but I still sit there in those moments wondering who will care for me.

FRIENDSHIP

It made me think: a busy food court can look like great community engagement, just as a busy sporting club or an active church can. But unless people are building relationships with one another, we're not doing enough to deal with loneliness. Busyness is not the answer to loneliness – friendship is. Lots of activity is not the answer to loneliness – compassion towards others is.

There's a powerful line from the Scriptures where Jesus is speaking with his disciples not long before he is about to die a brutal death on the cross. He says to his disciples, "I have called you friends" (John chapter 15, verse 15). A powerful statement. God is not some stand-offish God who is watching us

from a distance. God loves us so much that he sent us his son, so that through Jesus Christ we might have salvation, hope and deep and meaningful friendship. What a great promise!

So, while I sat amid the chaotic busyness of the food court that day, I realised that loneliness is very real; that I can help someone by reaching out; and that through faith in Jesus I can experience a deep friendship with a God who loves me.

If you're feeling lonely today – I see you. You're not alone.

Major Peter Brookshaw is a Salvation Army officer (pastor) and author living in Boorloo, Perth. For more information go to peterbrookshaw.com



Scan here for more stories of hope.

More than a meal

The life-giving impact of a humble toastie

At Marion Salvos in South Australia, the heartwarming initiative of Tuesday Toasties is bringing people from all walks of life together to share stories and build connections in a welcoming and non-judgmental environment – all while enjoying a cheese toastie and barista-made coffee. Whether you're employed, experiencing homelessness or just in need of companionship, there's a place for you here.

"Tuesday Cheese Toasties is possibly one of the most community-oriented programs that we have landed upon," says Major Chris Clarke, Corps Officer (pastor) at Marion Salvos.

"Our volunteers know regulars by name and remember their favourite orders, creating a sense of belonging and care. Tuesday Toasties is more than just a meal; it's an opportunity for social interaction, connecting with the community, support and the love of Jesus in action."



John loves to chat while he makes people's coffees.

Marion Salvos ran Cheese Toasties as a one-off event for Anti-Poverty Week last year. The community response and connection led to a weekly program, funded through the Red Shield Appeal.

"And then we added barista coffee," says Chris. "Who doesn't love a good barista coffee?"

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

John, volunteer barista, says that the main interaction he gets with people at the gathering is for the five minutes while he is making them a coffee. "Quite often they are people that probably do not get to talk to a lot of people," he says. "The coffee is just a binder, if you like."

For community member Andrea, Tuesday Toasties is a special weekly event. "I just wake up and I say, 'Oh, toasties today', she shares. "[It] gets me out of bed on a Tuesday. Eve, she cooks the toasties. She knows exactly what I want. I do not have to tell her. Matter of fact, today, I am just sitting there yakking away as usual and over she comes with a toastie on wholemeal bread and a weak cup of black tea. She knows me so well."

Eve, volunteer toastie maker, loves her role. "It does not matter whether they have got a job, whether they are homeless, we never say no to anybody," she explains. "We all think we are hard done by, and it isn't until you come in here and you see there are people worse off than us and having that toastie just helps them. A lot of the people that walk through our door, it might be the only hot meal they will have for the day."



Eve enjoys making sure anyone who comes in is made to feel welcome and at home.

SAFETY AND BELONGING

Alastair, community member, thinks the toasties and coffee are “superb”, but there is more to the day than that. “It is an opportunity for people to get to know other people and mix, to have a regular sort of Tuesday meeting place and develop some sort of social communication with people that they did not previously know.

“

It is so important just to sit and to listen.

”

“There is no sort of pressure on me to be anything other than what I am.”

Kaye, volunteer receptionist, welcomes everyone who walks through the door.

She introduces herself and invites them in for a cheese toastie and barista coffee.

“And we find that the connection with them at that particular moment is really, really important,” she shares. “And a lot of people come in, they are afraid, their anxiety kicks in, but we welcome them. And then, after they come back a few more times, they think it is a safe place to be.”

Chris says that the Tuesday Cheese Toasties has taught him “that it is so important just to sit and to listen ... the couple of hours that Cheese Toasties is on, the calendar is cleared, and we just engage with people. It has been life-giving.”



Scan here to view the Tuesday Toasties video.

Sweet potato and peanut stew



Ingredients

1 tbsp oil; 1 onion; 2 cloves garlic, minced; 1 medium sweet potato, cubed; 2 cups broth; 400g can diced tomatoes; ¼ cup peanut butter; 2 tsp chilli flakes; 1 tsp salt; 400g can chickpeas, drained; 2 cups kale, chopped

Method

- Heat oil in large saucepan over medium heat.
- Add onion and cook 5 minutes until translucent. Add garlic and cook 1 minute.
- Add sweet potato, broth, tomatoes, peanut butter, chilli flakes and salt. Stir well. Simmer uncovered for 20 minutes, until potatoes are tender.
- Add chickpeas and kale, stir to combine and heat until chickpeas are warm and kale is wilted.
- This can also be made in a Dutch oven and cooked over an outdoor fire.



Quick quiz

1. What sport is known as 'the beautiful game'?
2. Which game uses tiles and is popular in many Asian countries?
3. What board game involves buying and trading properties?
4. What recreational activity uses a shuttlecock?
5. What is an alternative term for backpacking?
6. For which outdoor activity would you need a sinker, gaff and rod?
7. Paul Edward Yost is referred to as the 'Father' of which outdoor activity?

Bible byte

"Since God cares for you, let Him carry all your burdens and worries."

1 Peter chapter 5, verse 7
The Voice translation

Tum-Tum

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



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

Wordsearch

Words are hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, forwards and backwards. Enjoy!

- Baseball
- Basketball
- Campfire
- Canoe
- Climbing
- Country
- Football
- Gymnastics
- Hiking
- Hockey
- Marathon
- Mountains
- Netball
- Outdoors
- Races
- River
- Rugby
- Running
- Skating
- Soccer
- Sunshine
- Swimming
- Tent
- Wildlife

HAVE A LAUGH



I went to buy a camouflage tent the other day.

I couldn't find any.

Why did the bread want to go camping?

So it could loaf around.

My parents sent me to mime camp one summer.

I still can't talk about it.

ON THIS DAY...

3 November, 1954

Godzilla is released

The Japanese science fiction film starring a mutated monster became an instant hit.

7 November, 1869

First inter-city cycle race

The first city-to-city race was held between Paris and Rouen. James Moore, an Englishman living in Paris at that time, won the race.

8 November, 1895

First person to observe X-rays

German physicist Wilhelm Conrad Rontgen accidentally discovered X-rays while working on cathode rays. X-rays are a type of electromagnetic radiation often used in medicine. Rontgen was awarded the first Nobel Prize in Physics in 1901 for his discovery.

Quiz answers: 1. Soccer 2. Mahjong 3. Monopoly 4. Badminton 5. Tamping 6. Angling 7. Hot-Air Ballooning
 Turn-Turn: is hiding on the coffee machine on page 12.



HELP GIVE A NEW BEGINNING THIS CHRISTMAS

"A friend of mine said, 'Go and see The Salvation Army. You need them.' So, I went and explained my situation, and they were fantastic! They asked me what support I needed, which was mainly food. But they also helped with bills and rent and financial advice. And it was so good to just sit down and have a chat with them."

– Karina*

*Name changed to protect privacy.

The Salvation Army walks alongside some of Australia's most vulnerable people to provide the friendship, comfort and practical support they desperately need to make it through Christmas and the months ahead.

Together as one big, caring Salvos community, you can help give a new beginning this Christmas.



DONATE TODAY

salvationarmy.org.au/christmas24



Christmas Appeal