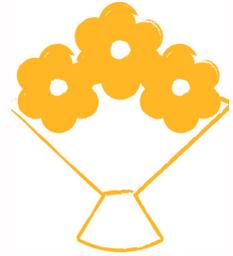




# New Hope - Spring 2022

Easter and spring mark the start of warmer, longer days and the rebirth of nature and wildlife. Fitting with these themes, our Easter newsletter shares a handful of uplifting and life-affirming stories from our frontline. Below, you'll be able to find out more about The Salvation Army's Community Gardens and Family Tracing Service, both of which provide fresh starts and new hope for thousands of people every year.



## Community Gardens

***"I love the exercise and being out in the fresh air."***

Tom – Service User at George Steven Centre

The Salvation Army works hard to help people to stay healthy and remain positive, no matter what challenges they might be experiencing. Over the past two years, maintaining good health and mental wellbeing has been more challenging for many. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to financial challenges, widespread loss and social isolation, all of which have adversely affected the mental health of many people, including children and young adults. One of the ways in which The Salvation Army works to alleviate this is through creating and nurturing community gardens.

Jo-Anne Graham, Service Manager at the **George Steven Centre**, a day centre for adults with learning disabilities in Kilbirnie, Ayrshire, knows only too well the benefits brought by their community garden.

Spending time in nature, walking, playing sports and growing vegetables or flowers has been found to help with mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. Being outside in open green spaces also improves sleep, reduces stress and other negative emotions such as anger. It also boosts physical fitness and promotes social interaction.



Tom at the George Steven Centre

***"We have created a sensory garden, with features that are accessible to everyone. The adults we support can access the space and engage on a level suitable to their ability, including potting plants, sweeping paths, cutting the grass, painting fences, or watering flowers. Everyone plays a part, from choosing ornaments and plant colours to maintaining the grounds and flowerbeds."***

- Jo-Anne Graham, Service Manager

At The Salvation Army, we recognise the many benefits that nature brings to our communities. The Community Garden at our centre in Sale, Greater Manchester offers a hive of activity as individuals from the community come together to volunteer and forge social connections as they tend the land and share it's produce.

Many local people living in flats, particularly older residents, enjoy the outdoors space. They find purpose in growing vegetables and lessen feelings of loneliness by mixing with others. For those seeking a peaceful setting, the remembrance area is full of roses and other blooms, providing space and tranquillity to process loss and recall fond memories (pictured).



Survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking at one of our safe houses are also processing trauma, feelings of loss, distrust, anxiety and depression through the therapeutic powers of gardening. The **Plant 2 Plate project in Newcastle** is a spin-off from our successful Victory Programme. We run Victory Programmes at several sites across the country, teaching participants to grow vegetables, cook nutritious family meals and manage a household budget.

Just like the Victory Programme, Plant 2 Plate supports survivors of modern slavery, many of whom have endured false imprisonment, to feel comfortable in social situations once again. Participants bond as a group, planning the design of the outside space and practicing English with one another. Most importantly, being outside in a calm and safe environment is extremely therapeutic: being surrounded by and nourishing plants as they grow has been shown to positively impact mental wellbeing which, in turn, supports survivors along their journey to recovery. Using produce from the garden, the participants cook together, share food cultures and build friendships. The personal growth, increased wellbeing and happiness brought by the garden and Plant 2 Plate programme play a huge part in each individual beginning to be themselves again.

In the words of our Anti-Trafficking and Modern Slavery Service Manager:



**I know the value our survivors get from being able to laugh and smile when gardening - like weeding, digging, potting - and, of course, talking together in the fresh air, having fun and being free - even for a short time - from thinking about their personal journeys.**



## Family Tracing Service

Founded in 1885, this service is one of The Salvation Army's first expressions of social ministry and is the longest running of its kind in the UK. We have been receiving thousands of enquiries over the last year, bringing hope and new beginnings to countless families. Between them, Service Manager Karen Wallace and Case Worker Lorraine Phillips, have 45 years' experience; every day they work to reunite families, facilitate reconciliations and bring resolution.

We help people who are out of touch with their family or want to find a relative they have never met, by giving them the opportunity to reconnect with a view to a fresh start or a brand-new beginning; we receive referrals from around the world. Most people approach us directly, but we also receive applications via agencies such as the various outlets of the NHS, Social Services and from our own Corps, Community Centres, Homelessness Services and Prison Chaplains. We understand that it can be scary, making that first step, and so our support can be crucial.



***"You've helped me fill a void that was there all my life. All I had to do was complete a form. Now my life is transformed."***

**- Jenny\***  
(\*Name changed)

We receive quadruple the number of enquiries compared to those that become a formal case, but our policy is to help as many people as we can. We share in people's desire to be reconnected with their loved ones and strive to ensure that we investigate all avenues within our remit. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we remained open, trying to help people already on our caseload and taking on new enquiries. The pandemic became a heightened time for people to think about their out-of-touch family members and, despite having to significantly adapt our working practices, we were still able to bring hope to people and make reconnection and reconciliation possible.



***"It is so special to play a part in reconnecting people no matter how many months or decades spent apart, no matter how difficult things once were. To be at the beginning of a person's opportunity to seek forgiveness, to have a fresh start or to say to their loved one they have never been forgotten, are day-changers for me and life-changers for others. It is an honour in the workplace not often found. It's a ministry for me and a privilege to be involved in an offering which demonstrates our mission to Love Others and Seek Reconciliation."***



**- Karen Wallace, Family Tracing Service Manager**

With an 85% success rate, the Family Tracing Service is a vital programme for people who seek opportunities for reconciliation and answers about their backgrounds and relatives. To support the sustainability of the work applicants are asked to contribute a small fee, never more than £45, towards the service. But, if they can't afford this, no one is ever turned away. This is why donations are vital in allowing everyone the opportunity for these important, and potentially life changing, chances of reconnection.



**Thank you, on behalf of those we help every day, for your support. None of this work would be possible without the generosity of donors like you.**



**We wish each and every one of you a blessed Easter**

**If you have any enquiries or would like further information about any aspect of our work, please get in touch with Emily Lisle in the Philanthropy team:**



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