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news

The new cadets who are entering officer training college this year.

Road to officership begins for new cadets

By Lerisse Smith

Embarking on a new and exciting transformational life journey serving God and others are the Australia Territory's cadets of 2024.

The Officer Formation team have announced the acceptances for training in 2024 – Jonathan Abdulai, Colette Albino, Benn Nicholson and Jose Porcia.

Jonathan, Jose and Benn have been accepted as cadets to be part of the *Keepers of the Covenant* session commencing this month. Colette has joined the existing *Champions of the Mission* session.

Jonathan, from Auburn Corps in Sydney, said what excited him the most about heading into this year was "having the opportunity of getting to meet new people and learn new things to empower my ministry."

Jose Porcia, from Coffs Harbour Corps, spoke of the Bible verse that defined his life in the light of the gospel: "This is eternal life, to know the one true God and his son Jesus Christ." (John 17:3).

Jose said his personal mission was the John 17 message. "I carry this message so that the love that is in me today may also be in others (John 17:23). This message has a

profound meaning in my life because, at one point, I was dead. But because of the love in me, I am alive and a new creation in Christ."

Benn, also from Coffs Harbour Corps, said he was excited to continue his journey with God and partake in the wonderful blessings God has in store. He said he was looking forward to meeting good people in a new setting who share the same love that he also has in Christ.

"I'm a blessed man, and I am excited to continue into 2024 where 2023 left off, walking in the full blessing and salvation only a life in Christ can provide," he said.

Colette, an auxiliary-lieutenant serving in ministry alongside her husband Captain Duane Albino, is excited about a more dedicated pursuit of growth and development during cadetship.

"I am prepared to commit to lifelong service for the Lord. My current favourite scripture comes to mind, 'Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people, knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord. You serve the Lord Christ.' Colossians 3:23-24 (CSB)".

Colette and Duane Albino will continue to serve at Albany Corps in WA.

news



Salvation Army emergency crews and volunteers responded to the fires in Gingin, WA

Busy January for Salvos WA emergency services crews

By Anthony Castle

The Salvation Army Emergency Services WA fed large numbers of emergency services personnel at the Gingin complex fires, north-west of Perth, in mid-January.

Perth experienced scorching summer temperatures across the week, with 6000 hectares burned just 85kms north of the city. Emergency services crews worked to consolidate containment lines and keep the local community safe.

"This season, we have experienced more larger fires than we have seen in previous seasons," said Benjamin Day, Emergency Services State Coordinator WA.

"These bushfires are growing fast, resulting in significant resources being deployed to control these fires. Our services have been stretched on a number of occasions, and we have at times experienced shortages of volunteers."



The Salvation Army Emergency Services (SAES) were dispatched to multiple sites in early January, supporting incidents in Oldbury, Champion Lakes, Chittering, Bindoon and Gingin (also aiding in the search for a missing person in the Perth suburb of Mundaring).

After supporting responders, SAES crews stand down, and volunteers clean and restock for future call-outs.

"We have been provided with support from our eastern states' teams also, which has been a tremendous support," Benjamin explained.

"We still have a long way to go this season, so we will continue to call for volunteers as the need arises. We would encourage anyone thinking of volunteering to please get in touch."

To volunteer, email volunteeringwa@salvationarmy.org.au



feature



The seven newest junior soldiers at Wyndham Corps are constantly prayed for and encouraged by the growing and diverse congregation.

Bucking the trend at Wyndham Corps

By Lerrisse Smith

Special celebration services to rejoice in lives positively transformed through a commitment to Christ have taken part at The Salvation Army's Wyndham City Corps (Vic.).

Evoking both emotions and inspiration, the services held recently at the corps' premises in Werribee celebrated 14 new church members and the enrolment of seven junior soldiers.

Wyndham City Corps Officer Major Phill Abram said the services, officiated by Assistant Divisional Commander Major Brenda Young, were emotional and special for the church community.

"It was a massive celebration of Jesus transforming lives," he said. "Some are more exuberant in their life transformation, and others are very private about their life transformation, and that's okay. When they say, 'This is what I was like before my encounter with Jesus, and this is where I'm going now,' that is what it's all about for us."

Growing attendance

Newcomer lunches held at the church have been a key element in helping to introduce people to the church community, with 14 new members being a significant number for Phill and his wife, Major Catherine Abram, who have been corps officers for 18 years.

"It was a sign of last year," Phill said. "Most churches that I've spoken to are seeing a decrease (in numbers) since COVID, but for some reason, by the grace of God, we're seeing a buck in the trend. We had around 70 new people come in last year and be regularly attending, so that was kind of the catalyst to do the membership and soldiership days."

And the reason behind bucking the trend?

"It's prayer," Catherine said. "It says everything. It has to be prayer, prayer, prayer. It's not by our skill as leaders; we've got an amazing team of people, staff and volunteers. We're very blessed."

Legends of the Army

Phill further added it was not left for Catherine or himself as corps officers to invite people to church.

"I was joking with one of the retired officers and said we've got evangelists in every age group in the church," he said.

"We've got evangelists in the 70-plus age group that are inviting their friends, evangelists in the 50-age group, in the 30-age group, and it goes down the line. The kids are inviting their friends to come too.

"It has not stopped at Catherine and I being the officers. We are actually seeing the gifts of God working throughout the congregation. And so those who are gifted in evangelism, they are doing their part for the kingdom rather than expecting Catherine and I to do everything in that space. It is gifts and fruits that are in action to make it work." ▶



Corps soldier Susan Stobie welcomes and prays over new member, Yvette Katoto.

feature



Assistant Divisional Commander, Major Brenda Young, officiated at the special member service at Wyndham Corps.

For the seven junior soldiers who were enrolled, the junior soldier preparation classes spanned several weeks.

Community outreach

Catherine said it was special to have the new members and junior soldiers be part of their "very Pentecostal" church congregation, which spanned many cultures including the Middle East and the Pacific, with a large population of the church being Africans.

"We have people who jump up and down African style, sometimes doing the African shrill," she said.

"It's rowdy ... there's lots of shouting, dancing and carry on, so we are historical rather than traditional Salvation Army. Our church meetings won't all be spoken in English as congregants are encouraged to pray in their own

native tongue and to bring their own Bible and read it in the language of their own tongue."

Community members have also connected with Wyndham City through its large red bus – affectionately named 'Hunger Busters' – that visits the local train station every Friday night to give away food and drinks and cook a barbecue, plus community lunches held during the week.

"We figured out that from those two outreach things, we've got a dozen people that have transitioned from just a food handout or a meal to actually coming to church and being engaged in the congregation," Phill said.

"I don't think that's happened before, so that's kind of really cool to have the right people in the right seats that are doing the work."

Being on the frontline is a top priority for Catherine and Phill, who are passionate about their corps work and ministering to others.

They have also greatly benefitted from previous leaders who have invested in their lives, stating it has been an incredible blessing to both of them, and they were "standing on the shoulders" of some incredible corps officers that had been before them.

And it was leaders who prayed over the church's newest members as their role was to disciple.

"I was looking at retired officer Major Rintje Taekema, and he was praying over a guy, James. It was a huge step for him to become a soldier. He was giving up a lot of family traditions, a lot of things . . . and I just went, you know, how beautiful is that, that he is praying and speaking into his life," Catherine said.

For Phill, he calls them "legends of The Salvation Army", like bringing a grandma and grandpa figure to reality.

"They hold the spiritual temperature high, and they keep the accountability high," he said. "They bring the elder-ship position in the congregation, and it holds everyone to a standard."



Retired Major Rintje Taekema prays over new member, James Key.

stories of hope



Jose shares his testimony at The Salvation Army's 2023 Christmas Appeal event in Sydney. Photo: Greg Donovan

'Meaningless' becomes 'meaningful' for Jose

Jose Porcia, a soldier from Coffs Harbour Corps, has been accepted as a cadet to be part of the 2024 Keepers of the Covenant session. He shares his testimony with Salvos Online.

I was born and raised in Cebu, Philippines, the eldest in a family of four kids. My dad died when I was 15, and two years later my entire family – my mother and my siblings – migrated to Australia.

After completing Year 12, I joined the workforce to help my mum support my younger siblings. I landed my first job with the Reserve Bank of Australia in 1990. I then went on to work for AMP Investments and Perpetual Investments until the early 2000s.

In retrospect, it was a relatively successful period of my life. I had a good job, my siblings completed their studies, my sister and my youngest brother both got married, I had a great relationship with my family, and I had a few good friends.

In 2003, I had a life-changing experience – an experience that changed the trajectory of my life in ways that I never dreamt of. One Sunday afternoon, a very good friend of mine invited me to his house in Bella Vista to watch Sunday football.

As naturally as pulling out a can of beer from the fridge, he pulled out a glass pipe and a clear plastic bag with a crystal substance. It was a substance I came to know and fall in love with – ICE, aka crystal methamphetamine. According to my friend, this drug was a source of wisdom. He reasoned to me that all professionals took this drug.

The moment I tried ICE, I felt on top of the world, and I was hooked. Suddenly, I had confidence. When I was in front of clients, I could anticipate questions. But, more importantly, it numbed the pain of the grief I was feeling about the loss of someone close to me.

The downside is that ICE stops you from sleeping. Sometimes, I would drink a bottle of whiskey to go to sleep. But sleep was the enemy of high. Why get high and sleep? So, I didn't sleep for days.

At first, there was a daily choice about whether to take ICE, but the addiction rapidly took hold of my life, and it became a matter of when, not if, I would get my hands on ICE that day. Within six months, I was spending \$1000 a week on my habit. This was all fine until I ran out of savings.

"They say there are three places an ICE addict will end up: prison, hospital, death. In my 13 years of addiction, I experienced the first two."

My addiction progressed so quickly that, fast forward another six months, I lost my job. I got evicted because I could not pay my rent. My car was repossessed. I had to move back to my mum's house. I racked up credit card debt to fund the addiction. I started to break into my brother's home to steal stuff to pay for the drugs. Eventually, my mum kicked me out, and I became alienated from my family.

I became desperate to do anything to get the money to chase the high. I turned to crime to support my habit, from theft to fraud. I shoplifted, I stole mail, I stole credit cards.

They say there are three places an ICE addict will end up: prison, hospital, death. In my 13 years of addiction, I experienced the first two. ▶

stories of hope

When you are in ICE addiction, you don't see your life as it really is. I remember one of the loneliest feelings was after being released from Bathurst prison after 18 months, and no one was waiting for me behind the gates. Nevertheless, an addict's instinct is to score. The moment I got off the train in Parramatta, I went straight to a dealer's house.

After being arrested yet again for possession in 2015, Parramatta Drug Court gave me a choice to attend a drug rehab. While I accepted the option, in the back of my mind, I still planned to escape.

I was released from prison with a one-way ticket to Coffs Harbour to attend a rehabilitation centre. I was also given a black garbage bag of donated clothes that were three sizes too big. Shoes that were three sizes too big. I had a rope for a belt.



Jose shares his inspiring testimony.

I was walking through Sydney Airport when I experienced my first spiritual awakening. I looked at everyone else with their luggage, and they were happy. Then I saw my life as it really was, and not the delusion in my head. I was 45 years old, and the sum total of my life was a black garbage bag, the contents of which did not belong to me.

It was the reality check I needed. I smashed my phone to eliminate the temptation of getting in touch with any dealers or former connections and spent 11 months in that treatment centre. It was Adele House, a treatment centre managed by The Salvation Army.

There I relearned things I didn't even realise I had lost.

The program allowed me to learn new routines to develop new patterns of living. To wake up at 5.30am, to do things you didn't like doing (like raking leaves every day), to create smart goals, to budget, to cook and to learn new skills.

There was group and individual therapy that facilitated emotional healing. This is important because when you take the drugs away from an addict, what you are left with are the reasons they need to use in the first place.

One day at a time, I got clean, and I did everything they asked me to do. In that rehab, through the work of Salvation Army officers Majors June and Russell Grice, The Salvation Army became an important part of my life.

In the beginning, my recovery was difficult. Just because I became sober, it didn't mean life got easier. 'Life' was, in fact, more difficult than 'addiction'. The reality of my situation now finally hit me. I had no skills, I was unemployable. I had to face the challenges of a normal person – getting a job, putting food on the table and paying rent. I couldn't reach out to my family. My family was, in fact, my biggest challenge because they had heard all my excuses before. (Today, though, my family is a big part of my life.)

I was an addict, even after I was clean for more than six months. I couldn't see the point of life. I was still the same person. I had no hope. Nothing mattered. Nothing made sense.

Then, one morning, maybe three or four in the morning, I got up to open the door for a puppy we had at the rehab farm. As I was opening the door, I tripped over my Bible, which opened at the book of Ecclesiastes, and I read the words "meaningless, meaningless, everything is meaningless". I was just stunned.

I realised that righteousness and foolishness do not matter unless we are anchored firmly to God. I realised also that I didn't have to look for God because God came for us through Jesus. That was really the beginning of the journey.

Once out in the world again, I had to recreate my life. I was lucky to have availed various wraparound services that created a pathway to new living. Most significant of all was The Salvation Army. The people there lived, loved and fought alongside me in the early days when I couldn't live, love and fight myself.

Today, I am eight years sober. The Salvos aided my journey in every way, and Coffs Harbour Salvation Army became my spiritual home. I went back to university. I graduated with a degree two years ago, and I am halfway through a Bachelor of Ministry.

My mission field today is with the Australian Anti-Ice Campaign. We provide peer support work and specific anti-ice education workshops in schools as well as in Juvenile Justice Centres throughout Australia. We do this in partnership with the Salvos.

I live a very busy life today. I have a job, I visit prisons, I run workshops in high schools and juvenile justice centres, I have a Salvation Army church ministry, and hold roles on various association and not-for-profit boards. A watershed moment for me was late last year – I got accepted as a cadet-in-appointment with The Salvation Army. In other words, to be a Salvation Army officer and work full-time in ministry.

Jesus said in Luke 6, "Give and you will receive gifts in full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and overflowing."

Please pray for Jose as he experiences The Salvation Army Training College this year.