

It's more than just party season

IT'S time to share in the true meaning of Christmas and support Australians in need.

The Salvation Army is launching its annual Christmas Appeal, aiming to raise \$12.5 million to support the heavy demands on its services during Christmas and maintain its services right throughout the New Year.

Each year, The Salvation Army helps more than one million people across the country, with December always being the busiest month of the year.

During the Christmas and New Year period, the Salvos provide support to more than 300,000 people, including serving 8000 Christmas meals and distributing 500,000 toys and gifts from Salvation Army centres.

This year, the Salvos are inviting Top Enders to share their true meaning of Christmas with friends, family and the rest of the country, via a newly launched website, TrueMeaningOfChristmas.org.au.

There is a choice of six meanings, and the Australian public are encouraged to vote for what they believe to be the true meaning of Christmas: faith, love, hope, giving, family or comfort. The site will keep track of the most voted meaning, so we can discover what Australia believes to be the true meaning of Christmas.

Major Bram Cassidy, Salvation Army spokesperson, says the site is a way of getting people to take a step back and think about what Christmas means to them.

"It's so easy to get caught up in all the rush surrounding Christmas on TV and in the shops. We want to use this site to encourage people to take the time to think about what the true meaning of Christmas is," explains Major Cassidy.

"Is it spending time with your loved ones; is it giving back to those less fortunate than yourself; is it the hope of the new year to come; or is it coming together and celebrating the birth of Jesus at this time of year?" Major Cassidy asks.

Share in the true meaning of Christmas this year at TrueMeaningOfChristmas.org.au and donate to The Salvation Army Christmas Appeal online or by phoning 13 SALVOS (13 72 58).

Aussie kids vote for their top toys as gifts



Delight them with some of these top toys: Above - the Real Construction set, left, and LeapPad. Below left, Lettersaurus is perfect for toddlers while the Razor Junior Scooter, below right, has two rear wheels for stability

FINDING it hard to keep up with the latest and greatest children's toys to buy for Christmas?

The Darwin region offers a wide range of shopping experiences; from the mighty Casuarina Square, to Toyworld in Berrimah and Humidity Gifts and Homewares in Knuckey St, or the popular Taylors Toy Box in Cavenagh St.

Yet sometimes greater range means your Christmas shopping experience is even more overwhelming.

Johnny wanted the Razor Ripstik but is it actually the Razor Rip Rider?

What was that cupcake-related toy Mary raves about?

Arm yourself with this list of Aussie kids' top toys for 2011 and boost your confidence while shopping.

Your kids will be impressed, making Christmas morning even more enjoyable.

Mission Future Toys is a portal into the world of the latest and coolest children's toys yet to hit the stores.

The MissionFutureToys website poll summarises the top five toy votes of Australian kids hailing from every state and territory, with more than 1500 votes received in the 2011 poll. The majority of Australian kids who voted report that they write a wish list for Christmas



each year but often don't receive the toys that they asked for.

Top 5 boys toys:

1. Razor Rip Rider 360 (caster trike)
2. Air Hogs Fly Crane (radio-controlled helicopter)
3. Real Construction (kit to build things from wood)
4. Lazer Stunt Chaser (remote-controlled stunt vehicle)
5. Ben 10 Tech Blaster (toy alien weapon)

Top 5 girls toys:

1. Squinkie Cupcake Surprise! Bake Shop (toy vending machine/playhouse)
2. LeapFrog LeapPad Explorer (electronic tablet with games, video, camera, etc)
3. Squinkie Doos Salon Station (salon playset for the Squinkies)
4. Disney Fairies Rainbow Collection (4.5 inch fairy dolls)
5. Pillow Pets Snuggly Puppy (soft toy that turns into a pillow)



Top 5 preschoolers toys:

1. Razor Junior Scooter (two wheels at the back for greater stability)
2. LeapFrog LeapPad Explorer (as above, obviously preschooler-friendly)

3. LeapFrog Count N Draw (educational electronic pad)
4. LeapFrog Lettersaurus (dinosaur teaching alphabet, colours, motor skills)
5. Squinkies Cars 2 Globe Dispenser (toy vending machine with Squinkies figures in bubbles)

Show an overseas soldier you care

TERRITORIANS are being urged to show their support for our troops who are serving overseas by sending care packages this Christmas.

Federal member for Solomon Natasha Griggs will be collecting the packages up until December 7.

She is inviting Territorians to send care packages to those soldiers who will spend this Christmas away from their family and friends.

"Christmas is a special time

for Territorians and provides most of us with a much needed opportunity to spend some precious time with family and friends," Ms Griggs said.

"It is also important to spare a thought for those who will not be with their families this Christmas, like the thousands of Australian troops serving overseas.

"To show your support, I encourage you to donate items that can be sent to our men and women on the front line."

Care packages will be given to the troops who need them most; those whose families are unable to send care packages, or those that just need some cheering up.

Puzzle books, cards, magazines such as *Men's Health*, vegemite, small tinned consumables and lollies and treats for the explosive detection dogs are just some of the items the troops will appreciate, Mrs Griggs said.

Many military partners have

told Ms Griggs that one of the most important ways to pay tribute to our troops is through writing a heartfelt letter or drawing a picture.

Care packages, letters, and donated goods can be delivered to Ms Griggs electorate office at 30 Smith Street Mall in Darwin up until Wednesday, December 7.

Don't forget to include a stamped, self-addressed envelope so that your grateful recipient can reply.

Spread the cheer by placing a gift under a wishing tree

KMART'S Wishing Tree Appeal has kicked off, this year aiming to collect more than 5000 gifts across the NT for distribution to a growing number of those less fortunate.

The Salvation Army oversees the distribution of gifts to a wide range of Australians, from children to adults and the elderly.

Place a gift under a wishing tree in a Kmart store from now until Christmas Eve and know that you will bring Christmas cheer to a fellow Territorian

experiencing hardship instead of joy and celebration. Gifts can be handmade or bought, wrapped or unwrapped, and a suitable recipient's age and gender can be specified using gift tags provided on the tree. Cash donations will be converted to a Kmart gift card.

Your local Kmart is in Casuarina Square Shopping Centre on the corner of Dripstone and Trower roads, or you can donate online at <http://wishingtree.kmart.com.au>.