

NEWS RELEASE

SALVATION ARMY LAUNCHES GROUP SINGING PROGRAMME FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA

The Salvation Army has launched a dynamic programme for people with dementia which uses singing to help them connect with others and bring back memories.

The scheme, called Singing By Heart, uses a mixture of popular songs like Moon River and hymns such as Joy in my Heart, which span the decades. Each song has been carefully selected to ensure they're fondly recognised by the people in the groups.

It is widely acknowledged that music can trigger past memories and feelings in those living with dementia. Each song begins with a passage of scripture and finishes with a prayer. The sessions are designed to encourage communication, recollection of memories, and happy thoughts for those taking part. It is also hoped carers will find the sessions beneficial through enabling time for them to relax, make friends, and share experiences.

Bill, 86, has been bringing his wife Anita to the Singing by Heart session at Sedgley since October after being recommended by a friend. Anita, 81, has been living with anxiety and memory loss for the past two years, unable to remember events within a very short amount of time. Bill says: *"Singing by Heart is the one day in the month when I can see Anita full of life and engaged in an activity. It's amazing to see her being sociable with others, and it's like she's back to her previous self. I've found it difficult to get any positive responses from Anita in the past but the enthusiasm and humour of the leaders at Singing by Heart is the key to its success. We were even up doing the hokey cokey at the last meeting. Every month our daughter comes with us to the session and it's seeing Anita smile again that keeps us coming back to spend this special time together as a family."*

Ivy, 85, has attended the Sedgley Singing by Heart group since last September. She takes two buses from her house to attend and says she "really looks forward to it". Ivy said: *"I'm a firm believer that everybody loves music and the happiness it can bring. My mother suffered for many years with dementia and I really think she would have enjoyed a group like this. Seeing everyone connect with the music in the room is wonderful. Caring for someone with dementia can be so hard and sometimes a smile is all you want. That is what Singing by Heart can offer."*

The idea to bring Singing by Heart to The Salvation Army was introduced by Lee Highton-Nicholls, who is the regional specialist for the church and charity's older peoples ministries based in Birmingham. Lee has 12 years' experience working in dementia care, and wanted to use The Salvation Army's musical legacy to bring those living with dementia and their carers together in an enjoyable and supportive way.

Lee said: *"Singing always seems to enable the individuals involved to connect with others around them in a unique way. I've worked with people living with dementia for many years and so am very excited to see Singing by Heart being used by groups across The Salvation Army."*

Army to connect with people living with dementia and their carers. We believe it offers people that opportunity to enjoy singing together in a relaxed and fun way.”

The singing groups have been piloted in a number of The Salvation Army’s churches and community centres with the hope of rolling the programme out to more areas around the UK and Republic of Ireland in the near future. For each church to run a singing group they must first take a “Dementia Friends” course, an Alzheimer’s Society initiative. A song lyric book and training video has been produced by The Salvation Army to support the programme.

The Salvation Army is dedicated to supporting older people and runs 13 residential care homes around the UK, befriending services, day centres, and a range of activities to combat isolation.

Andrew Wileman, Assistant Director of Older People’s Services at The Salvation Army, said: *“Often people with dementia can be overlooked, and our local churches and community centres are at the forefront of welcoming older people to weekly lunches, clubs, and activities. These activities are not only important in communities to help combat loneliness and isolation, but we also see older people with dementia and their carers coming to us in need of support.*

“We believe Singing by Heart is a great way to connect with people who live with dementia, while also providing them and their carers with a social situation and support network.”

ENDS

Editors notes

Audio and video footage available in HD on request. Footage taken at Sedgley Singing By Heart group: <https://vimeo.com/252168365/eefdafdaaf>

Video shot list:

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| 0:01-1:15 | Interview with Lee Highton-Nicholls. |
| 01:16-1:45 | General shots of Singing by Heart group |
| 1:45-3:52 | Singing - He’s Got the Whole World in his Hands |
| 03:54-5:11 | Singing – Moon River |
| 5:13-6:05 | Singing – This Little Light of Mine |
| 6:06 – 6:59 | General shots and chit chat |
| 7:03- 7:17 | Participant - Ivy Staines (on left) |
| 7:20 – 7:40 | Participant - Bill Loynes |
| 7:42 – | Margaret Hollis, Sedgley Salvation Army administrator |

The Salvation Army is privileged to offer services and support to older people. To find out more please visit: <https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/older-people>.

For further information or for media interview requests please contact:

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As Singing by Heart has only just been launched, some centres are still in the early stages of setting this up. However, below are current locations of Salvation Army Singing by Heart groups/where taster sessions have already taken place:

- *Oldham Roundthorn Salvation Army (once a month)*
- *Sedgley (once a month)*
- *Winsford Salvation Army (pilot completed in 2017, scheme implementation planned for 2018)*
- *Warrington Day Care Centre (taster session completed)*
- *Sedgemoore Dementia Hub, Liverpool (taster session completed and planned implementation of scheme underway)*
- *Carnforth (taster session completed)*

The Salvation Army is an international Christian church and registered charity which has been transforming lives throughout the last 150 years. Working in 128 countries worldwide The Salvation Army offers friendship, practical help and support for people at all levels of need. In the UK and Republic of Ireland this work includes more than 800 community churches and social centres.

Registered Charity Nos. 214779, 215174 and in Scotland SC009359, SC037691.

For more information visit the website www.salvationarmy.org.uk