



MEDIA RELEASE

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Feeding hungry families - Vinnies Christmas Appeal 2019

When struggling families face a Christmas without food or presents under the tree on the Sunshine Coast Vinnies volunteer members, known as Vincentians are there to bring them the joy of the season.

In the suburb of Tewantin, dozens of local families doing it tough are helped by Vinnies to have a happy Christmas, which Tewantin Vincentian Beryl Rowan said is one of the most rewarding aspects of her volunteering.

“Last year this young family came in, the husband had an accident not long before and he wasn’t able to work, they had three children and we said to them we’ve put you on the list for a hamper come and pick it up,” Beryl said.

“They were one of the families who ended up getting adopted through the adopt a family initiative here we run with some of the local newspapers.

“The hamper they got was three large boxes which were beautifully wrapped. The mother just sat and cried and cried and cried she could not believe that people would be that generous and help her family at that time.

“She said to us we weren’t having Christmas, we told the children father Christmas was very busy helping poor people this year but that’s not true anymore. That day will stick with me for a very long time because she was just so blown away.”

Beryl said helping Vinnies helps people from all walks of life at Christmas time, people who have been struggling with poverty for some time and people who just need a little extra help at year’s end.

“We have this one lady who comes in for a hamper, she is an aged pensioner, she came in and said do you think I can get a hamper this Christmas because I’ve got my grandson living with me and I don’t have any money to be able to do anything different,” she said.

“We also had a young single dad come in, we see him a few times a year and help him with things like school supplies through the Children’s Education Fund, he came in just to check he was still on the Christmas hamper list.

“We have one lady who comes to see us every year for a hamper she is an aged pensioner, but she has about five or six grandchildren, she doesn’t have the money to buy them all a present, so when we do her hamper we do presents for her grandchildren so that she can give them to them on Christmas Day.”

“We give so that they can give too.

“For many of them, it wasn’t for the hampers they get from us at Christmas there wouldn’t be any Christmas celebration at all.

“Helping people with Christmas hampers is absolutely one of my favourite things to do as a Vincentian.”

Beryl said Christmas is a time that makes her a proud member of the Sunshine Coast Community.

“We do get the wider community involved it’s not just us at Vinnies, the community gets involved in the putting together of our hampers, including the two schools in St Thomas Moore and St Theresa’s.

“It isn’t just the fact that we organised a hamper and it too went to someone, it’s the joy that people who packed the hamper got from doing it for someone they didn’t know as well as the joy of the person who received it.

“This year we are doing a special luncheon the week before Christmas, a lot of the people that come are actually homeless, and so we are making up small special hampers, because you can’t give a homeless person a great big hamper as they have nowhere to put it or carry it.

“We are making up gift hampers, with toiletry packs and tins of biscuits and things they can eat or use fairly immediately, they are like mini hampers for the people that will come to our Christmas community meal.”

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