

# Shopfront answers the prayers of many

■ By Julie Williams

Christmas is long past but I still reflect on the generosity of so many people during that time.

The Shopfront received an abundance of gifts and food from a wide range of generous sources, to hand out to those in need. The Sacred Heart Parish and Sacred Heart Primary School in Highgate, Catechists connected with the Parish, Rotary, Fr Brian Morrison's 'Crisis Care', as well as many oth-

ers, opened their hearts to those who were struggling. And the donations kept pouring in throughout December.

We were able to pass these gifts and food parcels onto the many needy people we knew.

We had about 200 people to our Christmas party and gave out presents to each one and food parcels to those who needed them. Then three days prior to Christmas, Fr Peter Bianchini, the parish priest of Sacred Heart Church, Highgate, informed me that he had more food and presents for me to give away. I

was overwhelmed by people's desire to help those less fortunate, but I was also anxious about how I could find homes for these presents so close to Christmas.

I then looked at one of presents and noticed a label attached. It read, "I am 8 years old, I picked this present for a boy my age. I hope you like it." My heart was touched by the kindness and thoughtfulness of this child. How could I not try to find a recipient for this boy's gift? On Friday morning, with Christmas only two days away, I was determined to share the generosity in which these gifts were given and I went in search of those in need.

I had planned to seek out women's refuges or even to go onto the streets on Christmas Eve and give these presents to needy families. However, sometimes God works in much greater and simpler ways than we can ever conceive.

Not only did God hear my prayer but He answered it in such a beautiful and Spirit filled way that I was left in no doubt that He had always been in control of this whole situation.

On that Friday morning I found myself rushing into the city to attend to the Shopfront telephone account that I had suddenly discovered needed to be paid.

As I drove in I continued to pray that I would find the right recipients for the remaining Christmas presents.

As I scurried back from the post office, hurrying along Hay Street,



**Reaching out:** The Shopfront is set up in a homely environment where people can find acceptance and a sense of belonging. Photo courtesy Julie Williams

## What is the Shopfront?

The Shopfront is an initiative of Archbishop Hickey and has been established for four and half years. It is located in Whatley Crescent in Maylands and reaches out to lonely and disadvantaged people in the area.

The Shopfront is set up in a homely environment and is a place where people come and find acceptance and a sense of belonging. It also assists people to obtain help when they have a specific need and networks with other care agencies to provide this care.

It is now funded by the generosity of donations to LifeLink and continues to be a truly blessed and joy-filled place. Up until her retirement in January this year, Sr Claude McNamarra was the

Field Officer for the Shopfront. She was a wonderful example of love to everyone who came seeking kindness, a gentle and listening ear or simply a nice cup of tea or coffee and sandwich. We are at present looking for more volunteers to assist at the Shopfront. It is open Monday to Friday from 1pm to 5pm and also Tuesday and Wednesday evening from 5.30 pm to 9pm.

If you would like to give one afternoon or evening a week to lend a listening ear and a kind word to people in need, then please know that you would be most welcome at The Shopfront.

If you would like to know more, please contact the Shopfront after 1pm (Mon-Fri) on 9371 9109 and speak to Liz.

possible as I had lots of presents to give her.

Fifteen minutes later two delightful ladies arrived at the Shopfront and I was able to load up their car with gifts and food for the children and adults that they cared for. As they drove away I was so overjoyed. I could not have asked for a better Christmas gift than to be able to give these presents away to people in need. The Holy Spirit had moved and answered my prayer in such a simple and beautiful way. My Christmas joy was overflowing and complete.

I past the Centrecare Offices and I noticed a lady carrying a box of Christmas type food. Impulsively I stopped her and asked if she worked for Centrecare. She said, "Yes, for Jarraminda". I then asked her if she needed any Christmas presents. I rejoiced to hear her say that she did.

She told me that Jarraminda was an organisation under Centrecare that reached out to families and children.

I gave her my name and telephone number and told her to get down to the Shopfront as soon as