

SSAFA NEWS FOR SUPPORTERS

WINTER 2017

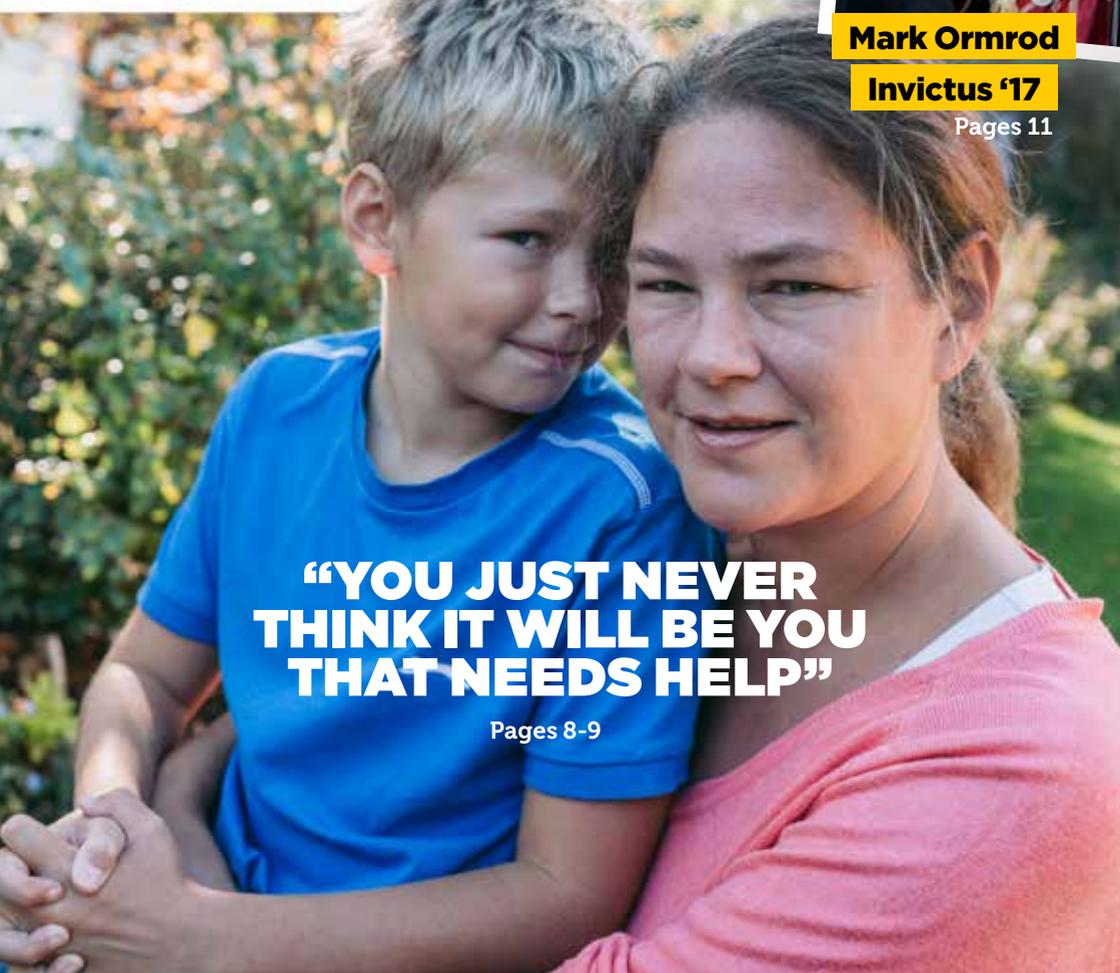
INSIDE



Mark Ormrod

Invictus '17

Pages 11



**“YOU JUST NEVER
THINK IT WILL BE YOU
THAT NEEDS HELP”**

Pages 8-9

HOW YOU HAVE HELPED

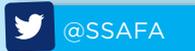
During 2016 we supported more than 67,000 people in the Armed Forces family. We will update you on the impact we've made with your help in 2017 in the coming months. With your support we've got the backs of the Armed Forces, veterans and their families.

FUNDRAISING PROMISE

- We commit to high standards
- We are clear, honest and open
- We are respectful
- We are fair and reasonable
- We are accountable and responsible



Join the SSAFA conversation!



CONTACT SSAFA

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity,
Queen Elizabeth House, 4 St Dunstons Hill,
London EC3R 8AD

Telephone: 020 7463 9225

Email: supporter@ssafa.org.uk

THREE SERVICES ONE CHARITY ONE SSAFA



92p* out of every £1 donated is spent on support for our services.

* Please note that within the 92p per £1 calculation, we include Funds raised for beneficiaries in need. This is sourced through a variety of benevolent funds and other charitable organisations, going straight to the beneficiaries we support.

DEAR FRIENDS

Welcome to your winter SSAFA supporters' newsletter.

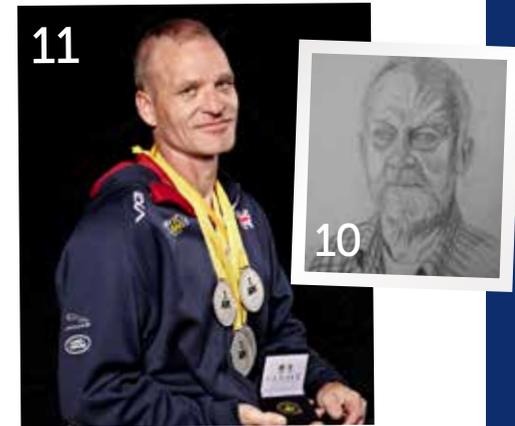
As 2017 comes to an end, we want to share stories of those we have helped over the last 12 months.

The personal stories show just how far your support goes in improving the lives of our service men and women, veterans and their families. Although there is always more work to do, and challenges to come, it's so important we pause to reflect on what we have achieved and also say thank you.

In this issue, you will read about our campaign, 'The Invisible Enemy' calling on the public to join our fight against isolation experienced by many veterans. You'll also meet Steve (page 10), a long serving volunteer who uses his passion for art to help tackle mental health issues amongst veterans. We'll tell you of Christian (page 12), a former Para, on a one man mission to walk the length of the UK coastline armed with nothing but his tent and determination! Christian struggled as a single parent and became homeless after returning to civilian life. With SSAFA's help and that of his volunteer caseworker, he was back on his feet. And we celebrate Mark and Andy's achievements (page 11) at the Invictus Games.

Please remember, it's only with your support that we continue to help our Armed Forces community and we will continue to work hard to help those in need in whatever way we can, whenever we are needed.

Thank you for your support throughout this year. **We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. From the SSAFA family.**



FROM DUNKIRK TO SOUTHEND

It's been 77 years since the Dunkirk evacuation but Alfred remembers it like it was yesterday.



Alfred, Dunkirk veteran, aged 97, is a member of SSAFA's Southend Veterans Club



It was just a flat beach, there was nowhere to go, you just sat where you were and hoped for the best. You couldn't protect yourself."

Incredibly, Alfred swam through the water to a British paddle steamer and made it to a camp in Worcestershire - where he was reunited with his best friend.

Alfred returned to France in 1944 where he had another near miss, driving his lorry off a landing craft into the water.

"I had a few lucky escapes during the war. My pal and I were in a cinema in Brussels when a bomb went off and killed 500 people but we were lucky enough to walk out only covered in dust.

"My luck ran out eventually, after D-Day I got through to the German border where I got hit in the back by some shrapnel. I was in hospital for six or seven months, I couldn't stand or walk. After the war I

became a driving instructor and I did that for 40 years."

Now Alfred swaps stories at SSAFA's Southend Veterans Club. "I've met some lovely new people, both other veterans and volunteers at the lunch club. I get lots of cards and a cake on my birthday!"

Our Veterans Clubs give people like Alfred the opportunity to get out of the house and meet with like-minded people over a cup of tea, keeping loneliness at bay. Thank you to all of our volunteers and supporters who give to directly support the clubs.

Southend Veterans Club is held every Thursday from noon to 4pm and is open to Armed Forces veterans of all ages as well as their spouses. For more information on the club, visit ssafa.org.uk

ART THERAPY

Craig, 43, served 23 years in the Army but left four years ago. He struggled to adapt to civilian life and ended up homeless and was also diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

"I volunteered for redundancy from the Army on 23 December 2013 - I thought it was time. I enjoyed everything about my time in the Army. I don't regret any of it. The Army is a way of life but it's been very hard adjusting to civvy street," said Craig.

Joining the Army at only 16, Craig completed several overseas tours including, Iraq and Afghanistan. After leaving the Army his relationship with his partner broke down, and it was after this very difficult time that he was diagnosed with PTSD.

"I wasn't behaving like myself. I was aggressive; I was using drink as a coping mechanism. At one point I was homeless, I ended up sofa-surfing."

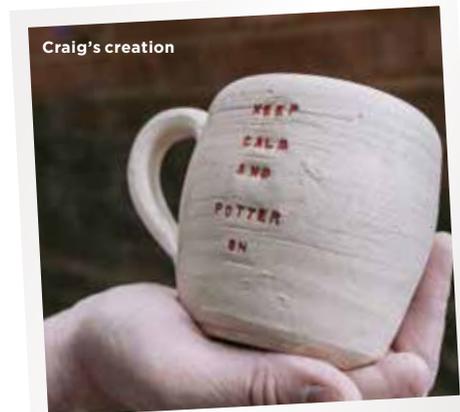


As part of his recovery, he was introduced to pottery through art therapy classes, and found his new hobby incredibly healing. Through SSAFA, Craig was able to source the funds to have his own potter's wheel and kiln.

"Pottery making is a great stress relief. It can take all your worries away because you are just focusing on that one thing. It also gets me out and about. I'm away from my family here and it would be very easy to just stay at home and isolate myself."

Craig now has his life back. His confidence has returned, he's learnt a new skill and he even takes commissions. He has a new job and is about to start a City & Guilds course in ceramics.

For more information on the pottery course Craig attended, visit potteryptsd.co.uk



OPENREACH'S ICELAND TREK



A team of Openreach employees celebrate completing the Iceland Trek.

On 19 August 2017, 13 eager hikers from Openreach one of our key corporate partners, took on the Iceland Lava Trek to help raise vital funds for SSAFA.

The team trekked for up to nine hours a day through lava fields, tundra and lush green hills. On 23 August they reached majestic Skógarfoss, one of the most impressive waterfalls in Iceland with a 60-metre drop. In total, the team walked a blister inducing 36 miles, in under five days.

Describing the conditions, James, SSAFA's Corporate Partnerships Manager, who accompanied the Openreach team on the trek, recalls: "We walked through actual lava fields looking down on some of the key spots from the 2010 volcanic eruptions. The scenery looked like something out of a documentary and the glaciers really have to be seen in person to be believed. Day three was a punishing hard day with very steep ascents,

walking through ice fields and biting cold to contend with."

The team raised a remarkable £37,500, helping to fund our free confidential helpline 'Forcesline'.

Often the first point of contact for our beneficiaries is through Forcesline. It is one of our most important services, guiding those in need in the right direction and getting them the support they need. During peak times, the team takes over 100 calls in a day.

Our thanks to all Openreach employees for their support. Our partnership with Openreach has so far helped to raise over £100,000 in aid of SSAFA's work.

GET INVOLVED

If you would like to see how your company can run a similar event or another fundraising challenge for SSAFA, then do please get in touch: supporter@ssafa.org.uk

'THE INVISIBLE ENEMY'



In October we launched a campaign, the Invisible Enemy, calling on the public to join our fight against isolation experienced by many veterans.

A YouGov survey that we commissioned found that more than two in five (41 percent) of British Armed Forces veterans have felt lonely or isolated at some point since leaving the military. When asked if they have ever felt overwhelmed by negative feelings, a third (34 percent) of the veterans surveyed said they had. SSAFA is committed to reducing these numbers by providing essential support.

To help the public understand what veterans go through, we used Virtual Reality (VR) technology to create an experience which demonstrates the comradeship of military life juxtaposed

to the struggle of coping with isolation after the transition to civilian life.

Sir Andrew Gregory, SSAFA's chief executive, says: "Isolation and loneliness is a growing issue across society and affects young and old alike. You can help SSAFA reach more veterans who have served our Nation by giving either a donation or your time as a volunteer." Funds raised will help us provide much needed face-to-face support to those fighting the Invisible Enemy.

Over a quarter (27 percent) of the veterans surveyed said they felt they would benefit from meeting someone regularly, to talk to someone who can empathise with their experience of the Armed Forces.

To help, join the fight and donate to end isolation amongst veterans visit ssafa.org.uk/fight

41% OF WORKING AGE VETERANS IN THE UK HAVE FELT LONELY, ISOLATED OR SUICIDAL AT SOME POINT SINCE LEAVING THE ARMED FORCES.



SSAFA SUPPORTING FAMILIES

MANDY'S STORY

In November 2016 Corporal Chris Small took his own life. Chris had served 21 years as a chef in the Royal Logistics Corp, including gruelling tours of Iraq, Bosnia, Kosovo, Northern Ireland and two of Afghanistan. But after he took voluntary redundancy in 2014 he found it difficult to adjust to civilian life.

Mandy, 39, who served 12 years in the RAF Police, was left to break the devastating news to their young son.

Mandy said: "I think Chris was so used to having everything done for him in the Army when he came out onto civvy street he struggled with the basics and got himself into quite a financial muddle. He always stuck his

head in the sand and thought things would go away."

"When you're in the Army your rent comes straight out of your wages. But when you come out of the Forces suddenly you have to budget for all your bills. He hadn't been officially diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) but he was obviously struggling."

Unsure where to turn for help, Mandy, who now works as a rehabilitation assistant, spotted an advert for SSAFA on Facebook and got in touch. Our SSAFA volunteer caseworker, Sue, called back the very same day.

"Sue went through all the paperwork with me for the pensions and helped

secure funding to cover the funeral. She has been absolutely fantastic. I'm not sure what we would have done without her. She even helped to organise the counselling for my son. And, when his wardrobe suddenly needed replacing in the middle of everything, she helped sort that out too."

Mandy and her son are now in the process of getting funding to pay for rose bushes to be planted in memory of Chris. Mandy said: "Chris spent three years at the local Army barracks and they have got a memorial garden where we hope to have his ashes. It will be somewhere for my son to go when he needs to."

**NEED
TO
TALK?**



SSAFA Forcesline is a free and confidential helpline and email service that provides support for serving personnel (regulars and reserves), veterans and their families. We are here to listen and not to judge. We can also speak with you in confidence if you, or someone you know, are absent without leave (AWOL).

Call us on: **0800 731 4880**

Send an email via our website:
ssafa.org.uk

**IN 2016 WE HANDLED 25,531
CALLS, EMAILS AND LETTERS
TO FORCESLINE.**

GIFTS THAT SERVE

If you are stuck for gift ideas this year why not consider 'Gifts that Serve'. You can support our Armed Forces family in a truly special way by giving someone an alternative gift. You could also remember someone special with a donation in their memory.

If you would like to give 'Gifts that Serve' to family and friends, please contact Claire Bassett.

Email: **supporter@ssafa.org.uk**

Telephone: **020 7463 9351**

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Meet Steve, a soldier's son, ex Royal Navy and SSAFA volunteer.

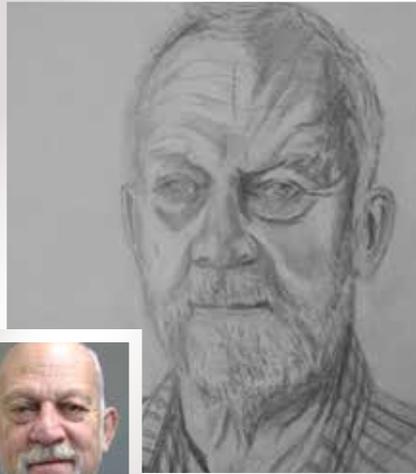
"Eight years ago I joined SSAFA and became Division Secretary. During the many visits to beneficiaries I noticed that a number of them had mental health issues. I decided to try and ensure that they received help."

"I enrolled on 'Mental Health First Aid' for veterans and their families, sponsored by SSAFA, to help people who were 'stuck' in their lives. This course greatly helped in working with the veterans in identifying mental health issues."

"When I was at school I had a passion for art spending most evenings sketching and painting. I became an Engineering Apprentice with the Royal Navy and eventually became a Design Draughtsman."

"Spending time with the military veterans, I found that many people were often lonely, with many physical and mental health problems. These issues made conversation and participation in the SSAFA assessments very difficult. It was almost by accident when asking a client if he objected to being sketched that I found that sketching them and the associated conversations took them back to a happier time. Once this conversation had opened up we found that we could move on to the general case work assessment questioning with little difficulty."

"We concluded that sketching the individual and adding a background from something that they had been involved in during their earlier life allowed them to think about those times. They started to want to discuss the current situation which enabled us to offer help and support."



Steve's self portrait - sketching is part of his unique way of working with veterans SSAFA supports.

TAKE ON A CHALLENGE

Ride to the Somme

Commemorate the cycling soldiers who fought and fell along the western front. Visit SSAFA Ride to the Somme website to sign up to a 200 mile cycling event in August 2018.



Sky Dive

An exhilarating sky dive challenge is the ultimate way to show your support for our Armed Forces family.

To sign up for a sponsored skydive in aid of SSAFA, contact

netheravon.com

Tel: **01980 628250**

INVINCIBLE AT INVICTUS

The Invictus Games are an international sporting event for wounded, injured and sick service personnel held once a year.

Mark Ormrod and Andy Bracey, two veterans we have supported over the years, competed in the recent Toronto games, bringing home eight medals between them!

While in the Forces, both men suffered life changing injuries and were assisted by SSAFA throughout their recovery. This included visits from our volunteer caseworkers, participating in our veterans clubs and using accommodation at SSAFA's Norton House.

In 2017, a decade after his injury, Mark competed in this year's Invictus games. He won two silver medals in the indoor rowing event, two bronze medals in the swimming event and was thrilled to receive the Jaguar Award for Exceptional Performance, Determination and Dedication, presented by none other than Prince Harry.

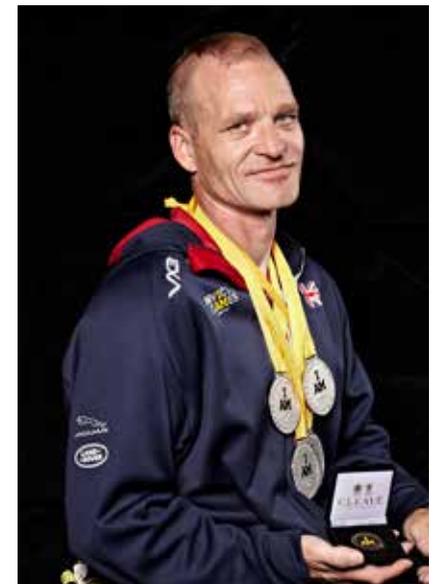
"To say I was surprised is an understatement as I had absolutely no idea but to say it was an honour to receive it, doesn't do justice to the way I felt," said Mark.

Andy has now competed in the games two years running. In 2017 he was awarded a silver medal in the 100 metres wheelchair sprints event and in 2016 he brought home a total of four medals in the same event, including two Silver medals in the 100 metres and 200 metres and two Bronze medals in the 400 metres and 1,500 metres.

We are so proud of what Mark and Andy have achieved, and delighted that SSAFA could play a part in their recovery.



HRH Prince Harry and Mark at the Toronto Invictus Games - September 2017



Andy with his medals from 2016 and 2017 Invictus Games

GIVING BACK

Starting from Llangennith Beach in Wales, Christian began his punishing walk of approximately 14,000 km around the coastline of the United Kingdom. Armed with nothing but his tent, he has relied on the generosity of the public to survive.

When he embarked on his one-man mission to walk the length of the UK coastline, Christian knew he would be battling the elements but he wasn't expecting Hurricane Ophelia.

The former Para left South Wales in August and was camping on the North West coast of England when the storms blew in. "The first night of the hurricane was absolutely horrific, but fortunately I had somewhere to stay after that!"

Christian, who served with 2nd Battalion Parachute Regiment, has taken on this mammoth challenge to raise funds for SSAFA. He said: "The support my daughter and I had from SSAFA and my volunteer caseworker David was absolutely priceless, it's what inspired me to do this."

"I have had some challenging times since returning to civilian life. As a single parent, I've been bringing up my daughter for the last 10 years and SSAFA have really helped me keep my head above water. I honestly don't know where I would be without their help and support."

Christian set out with no money and is relying completely on the goodwill of the British public to donate whatever food, water, accommodation and equipment they can to help him on each leg of the journey. He said: "I have been overwhelmed by how lovely people have been so far. I have made it this far, mainly due to the generosity of people I have met along the way.

"We're coming into winter now which could be a completely different ball game as I've only got summer gear at the moment. I am absolutely loving it though and my military background has definitely been helpful. I've made a few mistakes - sometimes I don't know when to stop. It's an amazing experience and I just love being outdoors."

Christian is now heading to Scotland where he'll spend the festive season. He said: "Progress is very weather-dependent so it's hard to say exactly where I'll be for Christmas!"

To follow Christian's journey or to help with supplies or accommodation please visit chriswalks.com or visit his Facebook page [facebook.com/chriswalksuk](https://www.facebook.com/chriswalksuk)

"SSAFA have really

helped keep my head

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help and support"

If you are taking part in a personal or organised fundraising event, get in touch and we'll get you started with one of our fundraising packs and a free SSAFA t-shirt. Email supporter@ssafa.org.uk Telephone **020 7463 9310**

WOMEN IN OUR ARMED FORCES

This year marked 100 years since women were legally permitted to serve in the British Military.

In July 1917 the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps was formed and in November 1917 the first women joined the Royal Navy. Originally, women's roles involved administration and mechanical work. Over the past 100 years, British women have served alongside men in almost 50 wars and conflicts, including First and Second World War, the Falkland's War, the Gulf War, Afghanistan, Iraq and, most recently, the Libyan Civil War.

Today, women stand shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts, with close combat roles in the Royal Marines, Royal Armoured Corps, infantry



and Royal Air Force Regiment opening up to women last year.

SSAFA was supporting women in the Forces back then, and is still there for them now. To mark this momentous anniversary, we commissioned renowned war photographer Robert Wilson to create an iconic image of serving women and veterans from the Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force, including Olympic gold medalists Dame Kelly Holmes and Heather Stanning OBE.

To read the stories of the women featured in the photograph visit ssafa.org.uk/women100.

BLEEP TEST FOR VOGUE

To commemorate 100 years of women serving in our Armed Forces, SSAFA Ambassador and Special Forces veteran Ant Middleton challenged model Vogue Williams to the limits with a Royal Marines physical fitness test. The test included a 4.8km run in two parts in under 12 minutes 30 seconds, followed by timed bleep tests including running, press ups, sit ups and pull ups. Vogue

endured and nearly completed this physically and mentally challenging test.



WHAT YOUR SUPPORT MEANS



AT THE FRONT LINE:

Thanks to you, we can support serving personnel facing the challenges of their transition to civilian life through our mentoring programme. You also help to provide our free confidential helpline, Forcesline, answering more than 25,000 calls, letters and emails every year.

SUPPORT FOR VETERANS AND FAMILIES

You help to ensure we are there for our Armed Forces families before they reach breaking point. You help them fight the invisible enemy of loneliness and isolation.

Your donations help to provide vital caseworker training to ensure our beneficiaries are in good hands when they are at their most vulnerable. Training equips our 4,000 caseworkers with the knowledge our they need to serve the Armed Forces community.

You ensure those in need get the help they deserve. Thank you for your support.

FOLD HERE

PLEASE CUT OUT AND FOLD TO CREATE YOUR CHRISTMAS CARD

Dear SSAFA Supporter

We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

from all at

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity.

ssafa | the
Armed Forces
charity





FOLD HERE

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity provides lifelong support to our Forces and their families. We began our work in 1885, and last year our staff and team of volunteers helped over 67,000 people - from Second World War veterans to those involved in more recent conflicts, and their families.

To purchase this and other Christmas cards visit:
ssafastore.org.uk

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charity

SSAFA Queen Elizabeth House, 4 St Dunstons Hill, London EC3R 8AD
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PLEASE CUT OUT AND FOLD TO CREATE YOUR CHRISTMAS CARD

