

THE BEAT

Gumboots
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Gumboots Newsletter

• May 2013 •

With great delight and relief, Gumboots SA has finally been granted PBO status! In effect this means that donors, both corporates and individuals, can now get tax benefits for their donations. We are confident that this will help us to get greater local support in the future.

To receive our newsletter or become a donor, email jenny@gumboots.org.za, phone 082 928 8806 or visit www.gumboots.org.za.

LERATONG PRE-SCHOOL

LERATONG STAFF

Along with the six teachers, Peggy's school is supported by a cook, gardener and administration assistant. Two of the teachers, Nina and Itumeleng, have been attending teachers' training lectures at the Anglican Church in Alex. Peggy is thrilled with their progress and finds that their lessons are more creative and their understanding of the challenges much improved.



Paballo and Lesego

enjoys her time at pre-school. Lesego, aged five (right), lives in a small house nearby with his two brothers and both parents. They are the lucky ones as it's a rare occurrence in the township to have parents – many are sick or have died, or the fathers are absent. Again we are reminded of the enormity of the poverty gap in South Africa and the devastation on family life caused by the AIDS pandemic.

STORIES FROM THE CHILDREN

I chatted to two children from the big group who will go to primary school next year: 6-year-old Paballo (left) lives at the Kadey Home with her older brother as their parents are sick and unable to look after them. She is a dear little girl who



The teachers: Dimahatso, Mpho, Itumeleng, Nina, Rose and Zedwa

THE SCHOOL IS NEEDING A CD PLAYER. DOES ANYONE HAVE ONE THEY COULD DONATE? SOME CHILDREN'S CDs TOO?

House-mother Sylvia with Bongani at the newly painted entrance to the Kadey Home.



CLASSROOMS AND FACILITIES

At the beginning of the year the Leratong "bottom school" was moved up to join the larger premises in 11th Avenue. It is now more consolidated and room has been made to accommodate the 150 children. There are now six classrooms, each with their own teacher.

The old bottom school is in the process of being renovated into a larger space for the Kadey Home to accommodate its growing size. There are 12 children in the Kadey "family" at present and it is soon to have an additional eight. The old classroom will be converted into a study room and there will be an open-plan lounge, dining room and kitchen. New bathrooms have also been recently added.



The Kadey kids back from Summerwood School - homework time!

SIGIYA SONKE

THE LETSOELA FAMILY

There is great joy in Jack and Beauty's family, as having lived in Alex all their life in a small, cramped space, while waiting fruitlessly for an RDP house, they have now purchased a large home (with the help of a generous donation). At the beginning of May, the family moved into their lovely new home: 3 bedrooms, lounge, dining room, huge kitchen, study, 2 garages and a spacious yard (for Jack's 3 vehicles). He is ecstatic and says he can now house the whole dance group when they are off on outings the following day. This is a great move for Jack and Beauty and will really help them to continue to do the wonderful supportive work they do.



A very happy Zenzele, Deli, Beauty and Jack at the entrance to the 16th Street house

TRAINING WORKSHOPS



Oupa is bringing another level of training to the older kids

Oupa Thibile has been involved with Jack for 18 years. Oupa was a well-known dancer in his younger days when he and Jack danced together. He then went to Soweto

to teach drama and theatre, and is now a promoter of dance. He has also been caretaking the warehouse building and helping to get rid of the squatters that have been living at the back of the building.

Oupa has taken on the training of the older children in the dance group, coaching the 15 to 20 year-olds to prepare them for shows, for example at Windybrow Theatre, Hillbrow, and the Pretoria State Theatre. They meet every day to dance and are taught and exposed to different levels of competition in the Arts.

WAREHOUSE ISSUES

Sadly there has been another burglary at the Warehouse. In the first one they lost computers and now all the costumes and dancewear have been stolen – this includes all that was donated for the end-of-year concert last year (pantsula and traditional skins and headdresses). This is a horrible situation, typical of life in the townships, but in true style Beauty found innovative ways to improvise costumes for a performance they danced at recently. The security of the building will be addressed once the sale finally goes through.



The joy that dance brings

- Dancing is treatment for the brain and exercise for the body – "it prevents you from getting lost in classwork".
- The children arrive tired and stressed – and they leave happy and energised.

WHAT DOES DANCING DO FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

Jack summed it up:

- Dancing helps to keep them disciplined.
- They usually pass their exams while they are involved in activities such as dance – if they drop out of dance classes, they often get pregnant or turn to drugs.

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RATANG BANA

It is an amazingly positive and inspiring experience to pay a visit to the Ratang Bana Centre. It is a busy, thriving, happy environment where you will find volunteers, social workers, grannies, workers – with Ingrid always at its heart. Lymon and his helpers maintain the food garden daily; the grannies come twice a week to help with the weeding and watering; food is delivered and collected by the children during the week; workshops are carried out; and health care providers use the offices to support the women and children under Ingrid's care.

RECENT GENEROUS DONATIONS

- a new container from Vodacom plus R250000's worth of non-perishable food inside
- a very large prefabricated structure from Speedspace in which we will house our new learning centre
- desks for the learning centre from Didata through Grant Abbott of Paragon

VISITS OF NOTE!

Dr Mamphela Ramphele of Agang visited Alex in March as part of her community consultations ahead of her political party formation. At Ratang Bana she listened to the women's concerns of lack of housing, safety, security and jobs. Responding she said, *"This [Agang] isn't a one-person band. We want South Africans, who have been left out of reshaping the way the country is governed, to feel that they can come in, look at this initiative, shape it, even name it. We know that South Africans have the power to shape their own destiny – we have done it before. This time we need to make it last."*

Dr Reuben Brigety II, the US Deputy-Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of African affairs also visited Ratang

Bana. He said he would be applying to PEPFAR (the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) for funding.

Marina Coleman, author of a simple, comprehensive HIV and AIDS booklet, spent a morning at the Centre. The grannies (and staff members) were soon put at ease around the sensitive subject and found the talk very enlightening. A trained peer-educator said: *"I didn't have a way to put across information with humour. When people laugh, they understand."* They all went home with books and a wider knowledge of ways to talk to their children.

New paved area outside the learning centre



Snapshot of how the learning centre will look inside



Ingrid showing Mamphela Ramphele around the food garden



Condom demo during the HIV/AIDS workshop



Rapt attention as they listen to the Agang leader



PHETOHO EDUCATION

THE NEW KIDS AT UCS

The first term is now well behind the five new children at the United Church School in Yeoville, and their results are very satisfactory:

Grade 1: Itumeleng (74%) and Lindokuhle (61%)

Grade 2: Nolo (77%)

Grade 5: Pinkie (34%)

Grade 7: Paballo (39%)

This 2 latter results bear out our view that it takes longer for an older child to adapt to the new school's expectations.



The school assembly



Nolo with her mum

Jack transports all the children to and from UCS and keeps a special eye on their needs. Beauty also keeps in touch with the school and all problems are quickly ironed out. All are now having extra support and lessons in Maths, English and Afrikaans, and we are sure their results will show the difference.

Nolo lives next door to Jack and Beauty and I chatted to her and her mum, Ellen, about the school. Nolo is loving the school and her mum said: *"Nolo always wants to stay at school, doesn't want to change out of her uniform, loves doing her homework, and spends time playing 'teacher' with the kids in the yard. She surprised me last week with her wonderful spelling. I was like 'Wow, my daughter!' On behalf of all the parents I want to say thank you to Gumboots."*

OLDER PUPILS

At UCS

Mzee, Matebogo and Puseletso are all doing well in their final matric year. Mzee's situation at home was devastating and last year he moved into the Sigiya Sonke Dance Warehouse space so that he could get support from Beauty and Jack. Unfortunately he found it impossible to study there – too much noise, lack of IT support, limited electricity. So Gumboots decided to move him into the boarding facility at UCS for his final year. This is proving to be just what he needs.

In Beauty's words: *"Mzee is now focused and his marks have gone up. When I saw how he now walks, I nearly cried"*. Jack also had this to say: *"He is completely different boy – he is kicking. I can see he is a gentleman and is doing well at being in charge of the younger boys."* Hopefully he will now have the support that will help him to get a good matric pass.



Mzee, now boarding at UCS, thanks to Phetoho Education

At SPARROW SCHOOL

Mboyane continues to do well at school and travels by taxi and bus to get to Sophiatown with Tsholofelo (the big "sister" of the Kadey Kids). We are very grateful that this school can accommodate children with special needs.



UK and SA news links

LEARNING CENTRES

Most children in Alex live in cramped overcrowded conditions which makes studying out of school hours difficult, if not impossible. To help address this problem project leaders at Leratong, Sigya Sonke and Ratang Bana have all identified the need for learning centres on their sites – a quiet space where children can study and do their homework with access to the internet, books and educational materials. For Gumboots UK this was the focus of our fundraising last year. We signed up to the Big Give, an online charity support and fundraising scheme and raised over £8 000 through their 2012 Christmas Challenge. With the generous donation of a fully-fitted, prefabricated classroom from Speedspace, the funds raised will cover the cost of setting up the first learning centre on the Ratang Bana site. This includes providing an electrical supply, securing and equipping the building with computers and printers, and adding to their small library. Ingrid is looking for a volunteer with computer skills to help oversee the use of the centre. Our long-term aim is to set up similar centres at Leratong and in the Sigya Sonke warehouse and to raise money to provide tutors to help children with their Maths, English and IT skills.



The massive structure is placed in situ

THE CAITLIN FUND

The memorial fund has now raised over £13000 and is currently supporting 3 young women. Margz Green was in SA recently and visited the current beneficiaries:

Kamvelihle Mkihze, who comes from an impoverished family, is an exceptionally bright young student with the potential to go on to university and make a contribution to society. She is in her second-last year at school and the fund pays for leadership courses, sports equipment and school trips; **Vuyelwa Mtolo** (the initial Caitlin Fund recipient) is now at Rhodes University in Grahamstown. She has *"passed (brilliantly) all my assignments and course work and am halfway through the first year"*. Although she has received a loan/bursary for the fees, the fund pays for all her travelling expenses, books and day-to-day living expenses; **Zinhle Kollo** is now in her second year at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) in Pretoria and doing very well. The fund has agreed to pay her basic fees, transport, food and sundries for the year.



Kamvelihle, one of the Caitlin Fund recipients



Gumboots is grateful for all the hard work and support from our partners KIDLINKS WORLD INC based in Madison, Wisconsin, USA.

Kidlinks will be returning in August with a group of landscaping students from California Polytechnic for another visit to Ratang Bana to upgrade and improve the centre, including building a CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND. We are all so looking forward to it.