

THE BEAT

JUNE/JULY 2015

Gumboots

www.gumboots.org.za



Thank you to those who have given their time and donations to our projects. The children and their families are full of gratitude for what they receive – especially during our Highveld icy winters. If you have any warm clothes or blankets, or if you would like to become a donor or receive the newsletter, please email jenny@gumboots.org.za or visit our website www.gumboots.org.za.

LERATONG PRE-SCHOOL



The brightly clad group

YOUTH DAY

Leratong pre-school of over 100 children was taken for an outing in June for Youth Day. The children and their teachers piled into buses and set off to Soweto to try to understand the history and reasons why the nation celebrates this day. They spent their time around Vilikazi Street with guides learning about the background behind Youth Day. And of course there were hot dogs, drinks and sweets to end it all off. More outings of this nature need to be encouraged.

CARING FOR THE CARER

Early this year Peggy tragically lost her daughter and granddaughter. Gumboots and all her extended



Peggy is very grateful for all the help and support

family deeply mourn her loss. She says it is through her Kadey children that she is able to live on with purpose. God bless you Peggy. Recently an American visitor met Peggy at the Kadey Home and was very impressed with her values and principles with regard to the children in her care. She presented her with a very generous donation to be spent on herself. Peggy found it hard to spoil herself when so many of her “children” are needy, but she finally gave in and we spent a happy morning kitting out her new room at the Kadey Home. Thank you Judith for the very generous gift to someone who really deserves it (see Judith’s blog at the end of newsletter for an interesting perspective).



At last! The modern, organised renovations are complete

KADEY HOME

After a whole year of renovations, the Kadey Home is finally complete! No one is happier than Peggy after the disruptions, dirt and disturbance to the daily life of the Kadey family. The refurbished home looks modern and yet warm and they are all loving it. It comprises: a glass-roofed courtyard entrance, two dormitories for the 15 children, two house mother bedrooms, a large open-plan lounge, dining room,

kitchen, and a learning centre. The photo tells the story. Mpho, one of the house mothers says: “The home is a safe and peaceful place to live now.”



Winter is here with a vengeance and the school is in need of more heaters for the classrooms. Load shedding is also a challenge in our cold winters – can anyone donate more blankets to keep the children warm during nap time?

The daily routine after lunch ... “magies vol, oogies toe”



RATANG BANA

EXPANDING AND DEVELOPING

The wonderful atmosphere of Ratang Bana continues to embrace the community and its children. Ingrid is expanding the garden and growing the centre's resources: a new food tunnel at the end of the property; new fruit trees to be planted; busy learning centre; and Ingrid is putting in place the practices she learnt in Madison (see USA newlinks abroad) – for this she is requesting old buckets, old wheelbarrows and the like in which to grow seedlings. Ingrid had the most the most amazing time: “There are NO shacks there! And the people work so hard! We miss America – we were so spoilt!”

Always a hive of activity!



BLANKETS IN TIME FOR WINTER

Thank you to the many individuals who donated blankets to our projects. With the great temperature drops at night in winter that Joburg experiences, these blankets help to stave off the cold. They arrived just in time for the first cold blast. Grateful thanks.

A little group of recipients of the donated blankets

A GRANNY IN NEED

Olga Madonsela came to see Ingrid about her desperate circumstances. Her daughter, Precious, got into drugs and prostitution while at school and Olga is now left with the five children from 5-14 (all from different fathers). She is unemployed and only receives social grants for two children, totalling R660/month – the other three don't qualify as they don't have birth certificates. Ingrid found the children with threadbare school uniforms and thanks to Gumboots she was able to buy uniforms and shoes. She is helping where she can and is trying to get Precious to the clinic for treatment and rehabilitation. Ingrid's says, “With so many cases like this in Alex, there is a real need for education. *Gumboots remain in need of funds for families like the Madonselas.*”



Olga and grandchildren



PHETOHO EDUCATION



Success at the end of a busy training week!

Vivien Hunt, one of our Gumboots trustees from the UK, spent 4 weeks in March running courses at the learning centres at Ratang Bana and Leratong on personal leadership, computer basics and Khan Academy maths club for the children; and on IT, personal leadership and CV writing workshops for teachers and volunteers. She found amazing interactive ways and games to help the children understand the concepts – and it's clear from the photos that they were all thrilled with their results. Thanks so much Vivien for giving up your personal time to travel out to SA and to give these projects so much of your skills and expertise.

N.B. There is a great need for more laptops!

SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS

Zinhle Kohle, an ex-Sigiya Sonke dancer, has just graduated from Tshwane University of Technology in entertainment technology in drama and theatre. Margz Green, her sponsor, was there to applaud her achievements at a beautiful and respectful graduation ceremony in May. This year she continues her studies converting her diploma into a degree. Her mother and 2 sisters joined her on the day. Congratulations, Zinhle!

Nomsa Mugwai, one of our star dancers from Sigiya Sonke, has been working for a few years and after having a baby, she decided to go back to what her heart has always desired – to help others in need. With Gumboots support, she has now completed an ambulance course and is doing a fire-fighting course. In her words: "I was chosen as class representative and also got distinctions for all my subjects. It is a very exciting and beneficial journey and one that makes me realise my potentials and strengths. I am humbled and grateful for the opportunity." She will now register at the Health Professional Council of SA. Well done, Nomsa!



Zinhle with her family

Nomsa demonstrating one of the techniques



SCHOOL AND HOME CHALLENGES

As a follow-up from a story in the last newsletter, Itumeleng Selulu has continued to have a challenging time at school and home. So he is starting at the Foundation School next term, catering for special needs with a learning support unit and social workers. Home life in Alex can be very difficult and Peggy and Beauty from our other projects are there to keep an eye on things and hopefully will resolve the problems for this poor young boy.





NEWSLINKS ABROAD



The magical scene of forest story-telling – all helping to raise funds for Gumboots

UK Gumboots UK trustees meet four times a year in London. We are always seeking ways to raise funds for the Alex projects and welcome any ideas and volunteers. This year we will again sign up for the Big Give Christmas Challenge. This online fundraising scheme operates over three days in December where donors have a chance to have their donations matched. We are also planning our annual Christmas Craft Fair which we hold in Birmingham in November.

We are amazed and very grateful for the daring and imaginative ways in which our donors raise funds: cycling huge distances, driving from London to Mongolia, running marathons, cake sales, dress-down days at work, and telling stories in a forest (see photo). This year money has also been raised in memory of loved ones and as an alternative to buying wedding and birthday presents. Our thanks to all those who help us make a difference to children's lives.

USA May was an exciting month for Kidlinks in Madison, Wisconsin. Not only is it spring, but we welcomed Ingrid Moloj and Koos Maredi from Ratang Bana for an intensive 10-day visit to tour local farms and to share knowledge of all types of farming and agricultural techniques. The trip was sponsored by Kidlinks in partnership with the Center for Integrated Agriculture Systems of the University of WI. In addition, we welcomed two other farmers from Uganda and Kenya who are working on similar farming projects in their communities. The trip was a huge success all round and helped us to crystallise our mutual vision and goals for our organisations. We all learned so much and we are excited to develop some of the ideas that resonated most with us.

Ingrid, Koos and Kidlinks determined that our number one goal for Ratang Bana is to purchase a bakkie. This bakkie will have multiple uses that will help Ratang Bana grow and diversify into more efficient methods of compost-making, food-gardening and thereby delivering more fresh food, as well as picking up materials and supplies for the garden. So far we have raised R50 000 of the R100 000 towards the bakkie. We are looking for more donations.

If you would like to make a donation to help grow Ratang Bana please send funds to Gumboots Foundation SA at john@gumboots.org.za; or to www.kidlinksworld.org or to Kidlinks at PO Box 628283, Middleton, WI 53562.



An agricultural team with Ingrid and Koos



Ingrid getting the hang of the agricultural ropes



AN AMERICAN'S BLOG

GIVING BACK TO THE WORLD

Dr Judith Coche visited South Africa in May. She lives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and teaches and trains colleagues locally, nationally and internationally. She owns The Coche Center, LLC, a practice in Clinical Psychology in Philadelphia. Find her at www.cochecenter.com

In May, I visited an orphanage in the poverty-stricken Alexandra Township of Johannesburg, with trepidation. What would I find? Would the children be clean? Would they wear shoes? Would they fear the tall white woman from America, so far away?

... I noticed that it was suddenly awash in broken-down homes and stores ...

The invitation had come through a Psychology Conference I attended in South Africa as they knew I work with children and families in my training. I was told

that the Kadey Home, assisted by Gumboots Foundation, was under reconstruction. Might I like to visit and spend time with the children? I was eager to learn. Driving into Alexandra, I noticed that it was suddenly awash in broken-down homes and stores, children biking dangerously in the streets, store fronts looking dangerous to enter, carrying produce of questionable cleanliness.

Arriving at the Home I was stunned. Before me stood a newly renovated dwelling with crisp concrete walls and new fittings. Inside I was surrounded by about ten adorable children, ages 2-15. Each well dressed, their smiling faces and shyly curious expressions bid me a warm hello. I was flooded with relief as I began to internalize the magnitude of this project.

Next to me an exquisite young girl had placed herself nearby. I said, "My name is Judith. What is your name?" Shyly, her huge deer eyes met mine briefly as she lowered her head and mumbled something in an indigenous language that I could neither spell nor pronounce. "I really want to know your name. Can you tell me your name again? And what does it mean?" I deeply wanted to make contact with this beautiful child and to win her trust. Her voice was soft and husky, a bit reticent but clearer this time. She told me that her name is Kgaogelo, which means "Mercy" and that they call her Bobo. I repeated it softly, "Is that right?"

I felt buoyed by my first-hand evidence that these children's lives had been turned around.

Her face broke into a gentle smile that gave her deep brown cheeks a luminosity that transcended the moment and created a brief bond between us. "What a beautiful name." I meant it. She took two steps towards me. "I have a granddaughter near your age. She is 8 but you are taller. Are you older than 8?" She

beamed proudly and told me she was ten and it was her birthday. I felt complete. We had created a bridge between us.

Given my ignorance of what constitutes a South African orphanage, I encountered many delightful surprises. I found a crisp glass ceiling in the entrance area that allowed the ever-present sun inside. I found bunk beds and soft hand-knitted blankets and Disney comforters in the girls and boys dormitories. I walked into handsome new showers, an efficient modern kitchen, a computer room needing many more computers. I met Peggy, the omnipresent director and one of the house mothers of the Kadey family. Peggy's 24/7 dedication to the children and to her community has created a safe presence for endangered children, many of whom live with successfully managed HIV.

My too brief visit led me to research other orphanages throughout the beautiful country of South Africa. Had I been so naive as to believe that the ravaged health I had heard about was grossly overstated? UNICEF provided me with a useful perspective.

The AIDS epidemic in South Africa has created 3.7 million orphans in South Africa. About half have been orphaned by AIDS, many have watched their parents die. Many communities need financial aid to afford needed child support. UNICEF supports safe family environments, often provided by foster or adoptive parents.

The Kadey Home is a model of quality care and protection for the most vulnerable children. Putting these seemingly contradictory facts together, I finally made sense of my jumble of emotions:

I felt terrified by the huge numbers of HIV-positive children managing this lifelong illness.



I shuddered at the thought of thousands of children watching their parents die of AIDS. I shuddered at the abject poverty, next to the stylish affluence in Johannesburg.

I felt buoyed by my first-hand evidence that these children's lives had been turned around. I, a total stranger, had been welcomed by beautiful and curious children with smiling and open faces.

The colors, sounds, smells and images of the orphanage remain with me, a powerful truth of the magnitude of change we can create with a few dollars we don't spend on luxuries. "Making a difference" is not just a nice phrase. The vision of the beauty of these faces has helped me to understand that giving back, for those of us who are able, is as large a gift to us as to the recipients.

And just what could make us all the richer than that?

To consider: How might you use your earned dollars to turn around a life or two? And what might that mean to you?

If you would like to donate to Gumboots, write to john@gumboots.org.za.