

# THE BEAT

JUNE 2017

www.gumboots.org.za

# Gumboots



Winter has come around once again fiercely and suddenly, and our thoughts are with the residents of Alex, many of whom live in shacks. Gumboots is able to help in a small way through your donations – thank you for the continued support and generosity. If you would like any information, call Jenny Prangley on 082 928 8806 or visit [www.gumboots.org.za](http://www.gumboots.org.za).

## Leratong Pre-school

### PEGGY'S STRENGTH AND SUPPORT

Peggy Chauke has many diverse hats that she wears and different roles that incorporate her wisdom and intuition. As the principal of Leratong, she continually monitors the children, the teachers and support staff, as well as managing the repairs and leaks that are an ongoing issue. She is also the supervisor of the 15 children at the Moss Kadey Home – most of them teenagers now, which is no easy feat. And Peggy also supports and helps Gumboots's other project leaders ... she helps Beauty (from Sigiya Sonke) with the dance children when advice is required; she gives general support and counselling to Ingrid (at Ratang Bana); and she chairs meetings we have with the Phetoho Education tertiary students, helping to facilitate the sometimes sensitive environment. She is a true leader and "mother" to all, and we are all very grateful for her insight and wise judgment.



*Peggy and her youngest grandchild, 18-month-old Tintswalo*



*Despite the numbers, the children have fun while learning*

### COPING WITHOUT STAFF AT LERATONG

The school is managing the challenges in the classrooms due to absentee staff: Dimakatso, the teacher of the 5-6 year olds, is on maternity leave; Nina, who teaches the 2-3 year olds, is not well and is due to have a major operation in June; and Winnie, the faithful cook for the past 11 years, will probably not be returning on account of ill health. So two of the classrooms are not in use and the children have to double-up, which adds strain to the teachers' day – hopefully this will not be for too long. When I visited the school, there were only two teachers for 100 children. Mpho, one of the house mothers from the Kadey Home, was busy in the kitchen preparing a gigantic pot of lunch for the kids.

### WINTER ARRIVES WITH A VENGEANCE

This is a tough and fierce time for the children of Alex. The school provides three meals a day, so the children are not hungry, but some arrive with no warm clothing or jerseys. Others come with very old shoes and no socks. Many of them are ill with flu but have to come to school as there is nobody to look after them at home – so the flu gets passed around. Peggy gives when she can – little 3-year-old Mpilo Mbatha was in need of warm clothing this week. Her mother died recently and she is the youngest of four siblings. The school is always in need of resources: clothes, blankets and mattresses for the children's rest time, carpets, art equipment, games, books and paper.

*The teachers wait for the remainder of the kids to be collected*







## Sigiya Sonke



### MADODA'S STORY

Madoda Maluleke, 14 years old, is one of the young dancers in the group. He is also Jack and Beauty Letsoela's grandson who lives with them. With some learning difficulties and emotional issues, Madoda clearly wasn't coping with the Alex schooling system, and he has been attending the Foundation School for special needs for the last few years. He was being privately funded during this time, but sadly that came to an end mid-2016. Gumboots SA managed to pick up the costs to get him into Grade 6 this year, however we don't have the funds to continue. The school awarded him a small bursary and Beauty is trying to find a way to pay the R2K for him herself (plus transport), but it may require a further bursary or a generous sponsor. This is a distressing situation as he is seriously needing the care and advantages of a small class in a gentle environment – and of course it's an added sadness that after all that Jack and Beauty do for other people's children, they are struggling to support their own.

*The young Madoda is growing up*

### NOLO KHOZA AND BEAUTY

One of the young dancers, Nolo, has also been funded by Gumboots at the United Church School for the last 4 years (she is now in Grade 6). She has been going through a very rough patch: not doing well at school; her mother is unwell; her uncle drinks and fights with Nolo and her 4 siblings; and she can't study in their small house. As usual Beauty has generously taken Nolo under her wing and for the last three years she lived with them. Sometimes Nolo gets sad being away from her mum, and then she goes back for a while, but things don't change and she returns to the safe and secure place provided by the Letsoelas.



*Beauty with Nolo*

### FINDING NEW PREMISES



*The Dance Group outside the church*

The saga of the old Dance Warehouse is a drawn-out, distressing one. For 20 years the Sigiya Sonke dancers enjoyed the space and freedom of the renovated warehouse for their rehearsals and socialising. Things went slowly downhill with a large band of squatters occupying rooms at the back of the building ... there was theft, danger from fires and intimidation. It took literally years to get a court action to evict the squatters – but in spite of this they remained! Jack and his dancers moved out and are rehearsing in a small church (which is far from ideal). In the meantime the old warehouse has literally gone up in flames, with three people dying and several hospitalised, confirming our belief that it was the right thing for the dance group to leave. In spite of the dilapidated and unsafe building, it continues to house hundreds of people within its shell.

We have been looking at alternative buildings for the dance school as well as to create a possible children's centre for other activities. This is a work in progress and hopefully by the next newsletter we may have some more positive news.





## Ratang Bana

*Talented and happy youngsters at the craft workshop*



### CRAFT WORKSHOP AT THE CENTRE

Two of Gumboots UK trustees, Angela Dyer and Karen Beard, spent time earlier in the year at Ratang Bana organising a craft workshop for children. They were hugely enthusiastic and responded well to guidance, but once they were confident, they came up with some great original ideas for crafts made from re-purposed waste materials. It is evident that there is huge potential within these children for growth and change but what is needed is a commitment by those with skills and experience outside of Alex to make an input. Engaging the wider Johannesburg community in this process of change remains one of the most difficult goals to achieve for our projects.



*Matebogo and Zinhle helping out at the workshop*

### GWEN'S FEEDING SCHEME

Gwen Abbott has been supporting children at Ratang Bana for the last five years. In her quiet, unassuming way, she has inspired her friends to make meals for families in Alex, ensuring that child-headed and granny-headed households receive a hot, cooked dinner at least once a week. And her driver, Aaron, has collected all the meals and delivered them to Alex throughout this time. There are many little families who are indebted to Gwen, Aaron and the cooks for what they have done. Every project has a life, and this one has now reached its end – and Gumboots would like to extend a big thank you to all of them.



*The Mbatha family receive their Christmas presents from one of Gwen's cooks*



*Waiting for the Santa Shoebox event in December to begin.*

### LIHLE THWALA

19-year-old Lihle is an inspiration. Her mother died when she was 3, her father when she was 11, and her caregiver aunt when she was 14. For the next 3 years she lived alone in the shack – it was during this time that she was put in touch with Ratang Bana where she has been receiving food parcels and support. She continued her schooling, passed her matric and got an NSFAS loan to study Operations Management at the University of Johannesburg (now in her 2nd year). She lives in the university residence but she receives no food. In order to survive, she travels by taxi apositive: *"I love living in res with my roommates, it was so lonely living alone. Life is better now."*

**ANY DONATION GIVEN TO GUMBOOTS CAN GO A LONG WAY IN HELPING INDIVIDUALS LIKE LIHLE.**



## Phetoho Education



*Mzee's graduation with his mother and Beauty*



*Back row: Zenzele, Mzee, Fifi; Front row: Nomsa (& her son), Matebogo, Beauty, Zinhle, Puseletso*



*Matleseng, one of Peggy's young friends*

### FUNDING ALLOCATION MEETING

While three of the UK trustees were in South Africa, we met with Sigiya Sonke alumni to catch up with lives of these young people, to understand their aspirations, the difficulties they face and how Gumboots might help them with regard to funding – not an easy decision with all students being worthy of support. Despite the real hardships experienced in their growing up years – many without parental support – they have all grown into warm, confident,

articulate young people with a strong desire to put something back into their community and help the younger generation.

With their school days behind them, they still face many challenges, and Gumboots UK, SA and the Caitlin Fund will continue to support them either financially or by working with them to seek out bursaries, educational loans, careers advice and mentoring. It was agreed to fund the following students: Fifi Moyo to

continue into 2nd year Engineering; Matleseng Matsheke to continue studying Psychology; Mzee Mjaju for his finals in Hospitality and Tourism; and Zinhle Kollo for her final year in Entertainment Technology. It was agreed that Matebogo Nxumalo and Puseletso Makhubela would be mentored while being counselled in career development; and Zenzele Letsoela was given start-up funds for his new arts and dancing society.

### CONNECTING ORGANISATIONS

Zinhle Kollo, while finishing her degree in Entertainment Technology at the Tshwane University of Technology, has been commissioned by Play Africa, an NPO establishing a first-ever children's museum in Johannesburg. For one of the exhibits, a children's stage/theatre, Zinhle has created the backdrop scenes. This is one of those times where all the boxes get ticked: Gumboots; a fellow charity organisation, Play Africa; Zinhle's herself; and TUT's as she hopefully will use this work of art as part of her thesis.



*Zinhle's work of art*

### SUPPORT THROUGH MENTORSHIP

Matebogo and Puseletso both matriculated from the United Church School in 2013 and have not been working since then. Kath Pott from Pivot Psychology agreed to career coach and counsel them on a voluntary basis and we are very grateful to her. Matebogo has greatly benefitted from this. While using this year in an "explorative" manner, she is busy in the following areas: working as a "Lead for Life" facilitator and trainer in schools; teaching children to read in Diepsloot (as well as Beauty and Jack's grandson, Madoda) having completed a "Read for Africa" phono-graphics course; working with LifeLine in helping school children; graduating in two IT courses in coding and web design; and with her outstanding voice, singing with a group and writing her own lyrics. So she is really flying – possibly into using her skills in a teaching and counselling area.

After Puseletso's sessions with Kath, she has updated her CV and is exploring work options. Using the laptop donated by Gumboots, she uses the wifi at the Kadey Home.



*Puseletso*





## Newslinks Abroad

### USA

An inspiring and touching story told by Liza Lightfoot (of Kidlinks USA) on her recent visit to South Africa ... Fifi Moyo, living in KwaZulu-Natal, was subjected to deep tragedy when his mother died when he was 13 and his father was unable to work and provide for him. Somehow he found his way to Alex where he met Jack and Beauty Letsoela who run the Sigiya Sonke dance group for vulnerable kids. Soon they became like family to him. He learned that hard work and a focus of energy would pay off eventually. Finishing his schooling successfully, he got into Wits University of his own initiative, earning a scholarship to pay for his first year Electrical Engineering. When things were looking bleak, he turned to Gumboots for help – we are currently covering his tuition for this year and are fundraising for the remainder of his educational costs.

We met Fifi for lunch and asked him about the challenges he faces, one of them being his need for a laptop. After hearing that on campus he waits for hours to get on a very slow computer, we decided to buy him one. *"I was afraid that there would be no one there for me, but I have found there are lots of people. For my whole life I have dreamed of getting a laptop. I cannot believe that day has come. From the bottom of my heart, thank you so much."* Like his fellow ex-dancers, he too looks forward to finishing his studies so that he can teach others all he has learned.

*Fifi (and his laptop) with John Lightfoot*



### UK

The 5th annual Christmas Craft Fair in Birmingham was superbly organised as usual by Gumboots trustees Karen Beard and Angela Dyer. Proceeds from this now popular event are donated to Gumboots. Held at the end of November, it provides an opportunity for early Christmas shopping with a wide choice of high-quality handmade gifts. Karen is an accomplished potter and Angela works in wood and textiles. Other stallholders' wares include glassware, jewellery, upholstered stools, knitted and felted items, paintings, toys and cards.

Gumboots SA thanks them both for their extraordinary skills and hard work in coordinating such a worthwhile and profitable event.

*Wonderful workmanship at the craft fair*



### THE CAITLIN FUND

This wonderful initiative, in association with Gumboots, continues to support young women through their education and is having a positive effect on their lives. With great pleasure we report that Vuyelwa Mtola (the initial Caitlin Fund recipient) has graduated in journalism from Rhodes University and is now doing a post-graduate diploma. She also represented her university in soccer and hockey. During her time as a Caitlin Fund recipient, she has grown from a shy girl into a vibrant and confident young woman.

Kamvelihle Mkihze who we supported to finish school and extra-curricular activities is now in her first year at Durban University of Technology, studying agriculture. The fund is helping her with travel, food and miscellaneous expenditure. Her fees and boarding are paid by a student loan association.

**We are looking at alternative methods of raising funds to help more girls and young women in life-changing experiences.**



*Vuyelwa at her graduation*