

THE BEAT

DECEMBER 2018

www.gumboots.org.za

Gumboots



As the year comes to an end with the "festive season", we acknowledge that for many this is not a time of joy or celebration, and we thank the many donors and supporters for your ongoing generosity. For any information, call Jenny Prangle on 082 928 8806 or visit www.gumboots.org.za.

Leratong Pre-school



HERITAGE DAY CELEBRATIONS

In South Africa Heritage Day (24 September) is a day to celebrate our culture and the diversity of our beliefs and traditions. At Leratong most of the teachers and children came dressed in their traditional outfits ... the Zulus wore animal skins and prints, the Xhosas

Celebrating heritage (Zulu/Venda/Xhosa/Xhosa)

wore shwe-shwe shirts, the Sothos had on traditional Basotho hats, etc. Everyone loved it – there was no daily programme, just traditional songs and dancing and different meals: instead of porridge for breakfast, they had cereal and for lunch they had boerewors, meat, pap and gravy. The day ended with a treat of icecream cones.



GENEROSITY AT CHRISTMAS TIME

The children of Leratong have for the last few years been recipients of the "Santa shoeboxes", an initiative raising funds to donate gifts to 1 000 facilities, but this year's tough economy and cost-cutting resulted in this school not being chosen. When "Small World" (a pre-school in Roosevelt Park) heard about this, they asked the parents if they would each donate gifts and involve their children in the process of giving and sharing with these less fortunate children. They also generously agreed to host a Mad-Hatters Tea Party for the school-leaving Leratong children (see photo top of page). "Our friends have arrived!" shouted the kids as the bus drew up and they integrated immediately ... the photos speak for themselves. Thank you Lindi for your bigheartedness – Leratong and their families are very grateful for your generosity.

Fun! Fun! Fun!



GRADUATION

The end-of-year is always celebrated with a graduation ceremony for the 6-year-olds who are moving on to "Big School". The "class of 2018" all wore gowns and mortarboards with their new school uniforms underneath as they went up to collect their certificates. Having spent 3-4 years at the pre-primary school, they are all now fed into approximately 10 Alex primary schools having had the advantage of an excellent grounding.



Well done graduates!



Sigiya Sonke



Pansulas at their best!

25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

25 years ago, Jack Letsoela was troubled by the number of young children out on the streets in Alex, where the opportunities for drug and alcohol abuse are rife. As a dancer himself, he decided to choose this medium to encourage and empower children to lead more meaningful lives ... and so the Youth Stand Together Dance Group was formed. Over the last 25 years, hundreds of children have passed through Jack's capable hands and there isn't a day that goes by where there isn't some form of get together to rehearse, perform or socialise. Jack is supported by Beauty his hardworking wife, who adds another dimension to the group – she supports the dancers with emotional and personal issues. With this rounded support, many of the dancers have gone out into the world with confidence and have achieved great things.

On 9 December we celebrated their success with a party at the Jazz Club in Alex for about 500 guests with singing, speeches, dancing and lunch. Gumboots is proud to be associated with the Letsoelas and we salute them both for their extraordinary achievements in spite of the difficult challenges that surround them.

A SEASON FOR GIVING

As with Leratong, the Sigiya Sonke dancers were not able to receive Santa Shoeboxes this year. Thanks to the very generous donation from the Lotus Register, they won't be going unrewarded for their hard work ... the 42 children all received amazing parcels, which were handed out at the 25th anniversary party. We are grateful for the support and generosity of all involved.



Thanks for the wonderful gifts!

A NEW BRIGHT STAR

Lindokhule Khumalo is 9 years old and, in spite of her tiny size, is a talented dancer. She was awarded the certificate for "best dancer in the group" and she also loves helping to coach the younger children. When chatting to her, she said, "Dancing is my best thing. Uncle Jack treats us so well". When the group attended the Tshwane Dance Competition recently, Lindokuhle was given a trophy for the best pansula dancer in the competition. Jack is very proud of the whole group which came 3rd overall.



Lindokhule with her trophy



Ratang Bana



THE "SAFE HOUSE"

The children have settled in to their new safe home, with some inevitable ups and downs: a much-needed shower room has been built; their house mother has been replaced by Lenyalo Mokoena; and there have been a few issues that may require us to build a new room to separate the boys and girls (see under the US, page 5). This safe haven has been a blessing for these abandoned children.

Safe house children surrounded by their gifts

Johnny, the eldest boy of 14, is sadly having desperate emotional difficulties (photo top right). He is missing his family, especially his granny (all 6 family members have passed away). Suffering from severe depression, the poor boy has been referred for counselling. Hearing about Johnny from teachers at school, an amazing group known as CAS (Community Assisting Schools) has rallied to his and the other children's cause and they have donated huge gifts, hampers and food. Thank you so much for your generosity.

THE HIGHS AND THE LOWS

There is so much positive to take away after a visit to Ratang Bana ... the smiling happy children, some in the playground, some helping in the garden, others skipping with a long handmade rope; Koos's new garden features that he's planted and erected around the Centre; Ingrid's positivity. And then of course the flipside is the sadness and desperation that abides: I met one small boy of eight whose mother is psychologically unstable and beats him. In turn, he comes to the Centre and beats up all the kids around him. Poor child, what future does he have? And then I saw four young boys "shooting" at other kids with realistic toy revolvers. Koos confiscated them, Ingrid chastised them, but what lies ahead for them?



Ingrid's husband Koos with friends

I asked Ingrid, "How do you cope?"

"You must be happy to wake up each day and you must go to bed without the pain of the horrible stories of the day. You must learn to let the pain go and you must say thank you to God. **I am so grateful to the donors – not only about the money, but it's the love in the donations that matters.**"



Ingrid amongst the spinach

SPINACH FOR AFRICA

The garden continues to flourish, thanks to the many volunteers who plant, water and nurture it. Every plant has its many uses ... for example, the onions are not only cooked as a vegetable but the stems are chopped up with herbs to make an immune-boosting medicine, and the flowers are left to go to seed to be propagated.

The Department of Agriculture has a 5-year agreement with Ingrid to supply spinach seeds and to turn the whole food garden into a "spinach farm" and they will buy the produce every week. With her new status of "farmer", Ingrid intends to exchange the flower gardens for other needed veggies for the Centre, such as onions, beetroot and carrots.



Phetoho Education



GOOD NEWS AT THE END OF A CHALLENGING TIME

In 2017, Fifi Moyo was studying 2nd year electrical engineering at Wits but in spite of his hard work, he was unsuccessful in the final exams. He'd had a very challenging year and was very disappointed to interrupt his studies. However, the good news is that six months ago he was given an internship position at an international electronics firm, which he hopes will become a permanent position. Congratulations Fifi for your tenacity and enthusiasm.

Talented young girls, Matebogo and Petunia



MATEBOGO AND PETUNIA

Many years after leaving the Sigiya Sonke group, two of the dancers are still committed to supporting Jack. Matebogo Khumalo and Petunia Dube have helped to organise the 25th anniversary of the dance group and designed a brochure to acknowledge it. They collected old photos from way back in 1993 when Jack first began his extraordinary mission to gather local children from the streets into his home to teach them to dance ... as well as teaching many other lifeskills. Matebogo and Petunia are also working together to teach children to read. Well done on your initiative – you are making a difference to so many young lives.

VALEDICTORY AT THE UCS

Deep in the heart of the busy suburb of Yeoville is the United Church School (UCS). It is a long-established private school with an excellent reputation. Over the past 10 years, Gumboots has sponsored many students through our Phetoho Education programme. Thato Makgotla is our most recent graduate and she played a prominent role in the valedictory service, leading the way up to the stage and making a very powerful speech. She was also one of the St Mary's School outreach students, where she also made an outstanding speech on behalf of the matric class.



Thato, leading the way



Newslinks Abroad

USA This year Kidlinks and Gumboots pooled resources to create a “safe house” for kids at Ratang Bana. Having set up the shelter, we realised that shared space between boys and girls is not ideal, so Kidlinks committed to raising funds to create a separate space for the boys. One of the board members wrote a grant to the Returning Peace Corp Volunteers of Madison, which was sponsored by a US Peace Corp volunteer who visited Ratang Bana and volunteered during the initial building of the playground. Kidlinks has now received a \$3 000 grant and the building will commence as soon as possible. If you would like to contribute to this project, please contact Kidlinks US or Gumboots UK or SA.



One of the stalls at the Madison craft fundraiser

UK



Craft Fair in Birmingham

November and December are busy months for Gumboots UK. They held their annual Christmas Craft Market on 25 November and 18 local makers had stalls selling a variety of handcrafted items. UK trustees Karen and Angela also worked tirelessly for many months to make high-quality ceramics, wooden candle holders, mobiles and textiles. Friends and Gumboots' supporters ran the cafe offering homemade cakes, soups and muffins. A regular feature is the local community choir “Moseley Voices” who this year entertained shoppers with South African songs, including one to celebrate Mandela's centenary. The craft market's reputation as a sociable, good place to buy unusual Christmas presents is spreading and they raised just over £4 000.

Hot on the heels was the Big Give Christmas Challenge – the UK's biggest online match-funding campaign. For seven days, it offers supporters of participating charities the opportunity to have their donations doubled. This year Gumboots met their target and raised £7 000 to help set up an Activity Club in Alex to take children out of the township to fun and interesting places. A huge thank you to all those who helped, donated and supported both these initiatives – without you none of this would have been possible.

THE CAITLIN FUND



Happy sisters!

The two sisters supported by the Caitlin Fund are doing incredibly well and are really happy in the “safe house”. Mbali, now 12, has caught up with all her schoolwork, in spite of missing two years of school and her results are excellent: In the 70s for Maths and English, and in the 60s for Zulu, having never learnt it before. Her school report stated “Your work deserves praise!” Thandi, her little sister of 8, is also doing well in Grade 1.

Vuyelwa Mtolo, who is coming to the end of her very successful Media 24 internship at the *Natal Witness* in Pietermaritzburg, was named as the **KZN representative for the young journalist-of-the-year award**. This is a huge honour and she has the chance to do further training if she wins the award. She is also considering spending some time in China teaching English as she has just self-funded a TEFL course. We are all very proud of her achievements.