

One school term of 2004 down and two more to go. The new term has opened with ten children on the register and sponsors for each one. We are truly grateful to everyone who is giving so generously towards the futures of these children. They have returned with great excitement to their school which they all, reportedly, missed terribly for the duration of the school holidays. Parents were being woken early every morning to be informed that it was time to go to school, and one little girl even went so far as to accuse her mother of not wanting her to return to school. It is such a blessing to know that these children are happy and yearn for the time they spend at school. Only one bit of sad news is that during the last week of the holidays the home of one of my informal settlement children was burnt down in an accidental fire along with 4 other homes. The mother managed to save only some of the clothes of her oldest child, but lost everything else that she owned. We will try to help her in whichever way we can to find supplies, clothes and materials with which to build a new home.

Donations of all sorts keep flowing in and I am happy to say that we now have carpets in all our classrooms and some spare for when we open new classrooms, which will hopefully be next year. Thank you to all who have been involved in making this possible. A thank you also to everyone who keeps me so well supplied in the anti-waste department – the children are able to do so much !

Thoko is no longer with me in the office as she became very ill and is awaiting surgery, while taking care of her very aged mother who has also undergone surgery. She is hoping to find employment in Gauteng. So, my office is no longer as spruce as it was, and I now face the challenge of getting my administrative skills honed to resemble something as close to orderliness as possible. To quote Simba (The Lion King ) Ha haaaa – I laugh in the face of danger!!!!!!

Our fundraiser competition, with the portrait composition by Christine Lamberth as the prize, closed on 15 August. We are so grateful for the R7000 + that was raised through this endeavour. The winner of the framed work is Mrs. Monique Rutter, who bought her ticket at the Shelly Centre and went into the draw alongside 15 other people who correctly guessed the time it took for the artist to complete the picture to be 21 hours. A great big thank you to all who helped us to sell tickets – never an endearing task. We are very grateful for your support and effort. We took the competition to the Shelly Centre in Shelly Beach during the holidays, and not only raised R2000 on that weekend, but also managed to find two more sponsors for the children. We also made contact with a gentleman who has given us a variety of possible contacts for overseas sponsorship. All in all a very worthwhile weekend. Thank you to all who supported us and to the ladies who gave up time to spend the weekend away from home for the furtherance of our cause.

We are planning a fun run/walk with a difference for later in the year and are looking for a sponsor/s for this event. If anyone knows of any company that may be willing to get involved in one way or another, please let me or Jeff Jaggard know their details so that we can contact them.

It has been a huge but pleasant surprise to see the children's work since returning from the holidays. There has been such an enormous improvement in their skills that I begin to wonder whether they have been exposed to more stimuli of which I am unaware. Please see the attached page which illustrates what I am talking about.

I had the honour of meeting the children of the Maris Stella Grade 2 class who are supporting us this year. They came along at the end of the term to meet the children and see the school. It was a very lively, happy time that the children spent together and a very happy, grateful principal who greeted them as they arrived with donations of toys, clothes and food/groceries. Thank you again to the children and their parents for their generosity. Also attached, you will find some of the stories that these children wrote upon their return to school concerning their visit to Udobo.

Applications have started to come in for next year and I anticipate many more in the remaining months of this year as well as at the beginning of next year. With this in mind we are on the verge of more assertively seeking sponsors for the children for the year 2005. All our present supporters will hear from us in the near

future concerning our newest idea in gaining more sponsorship. I do hope that many, if not all, will jump on board and assist us in the new endeavour.

It has come to my attention that some people are under the impression that we cater only for children of the unemployed. This is by no means the case. We cater for any families who cannot afford the option of a Grade R year for their children. Our fees are worked out according to a sliding scale dependent on each particular family's means. We, also, are not meant to be seen as competition to the local schools in the area, since we do not accept any children from families whom we feel are in a position to send their children to the already established schools. We are here as a service to the DISADVANTAGED members of our community. Please assist us by spreading the word.

My husband is due to take his Sabbatical leave after ten years of service to the Methodist Church. We will be leaving on an overseas trip on 24 August and I will be away for approximately 7 weeks, during which time Mrs. Jacky Hardman will be stepping in as a locum for me. She is a qualified and experienced teacher and seems to be very excited about the opportunity to serve the children in this way. I want to thank her in anticipation for releasing me to spend this 20 year awaited holiday with my husband. It is most gratifying to be able to leave the responsibility of the school in such capable hands. Of course, I have been overloading on the stress scale in order to have everything as ready as possible for her – especially all the documentation she will no doubt be needing in the case of new parents etc. – which I have had translated into Zulu so that anybody reading them will understand the contents without too much doubt as to what they are signing.

Finally, before I close, I would like to appeal to anyone who has an opening for domestic workers to please consider 3 of the mothers of my children who are desperately seeking employment. In fact, 2 have indicated that they are willing to do any form of work – so please would you keep them in mind if you hear of anyone who may have an opening. Thank you in anticipation.

Please continue to feel free to pop in at any time to meet the children and to see the work they are doing. We love to show ourselves off to anybody who is interested enough to look.

Proverbs 22:6

Always Fishing

Kathy Mercer (Principal)