

SEPTEMBER 2008

THE  SCHOOL

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Dear Friends of Udobo

It seems just like yesterday that I last communicated with you and yet I have so much to tell. We have had a really blessed term again. We now face the last stretch before the year-end function and seeing approximately 50 children off to Grade 1.

Firstly, I need to share the administrative developments that have taken place over the last few months. A new portfolio has been created – that of Director of the Udobo Schools Project. This is a position that will take hold of a variety of responsibilities; the two most important being the promotion and exposure of the project, and the development of the project towards erecting “daughter” schools in our poorer communities, i.e. taking the schools to the poor where they are needed. This position will be filled by yours truly. Therefore, a new principal has been appointed to start at Udobo at the beginning of October 2008. Anne Snyders will be joining us after closing her term at her present school of employment. She has many years of experience in the field of ECD and I am certain that her breath of fresh air will prove to be a blessing to the school, staff and children. I will work alongside her for the first while, hopefully making the transition easier on all concerned and assisting her to settle into the position with as little stress as possible.

That leads on to the renovation of the last available stable to become my office. We are trying to preserve as much of the authenticity of the stable as possible – just to keep the legacy alive. One of our school children’s dad’s has been doing the work and has left me gob-smacked at his speed, efficiency and neat approach to his work. He has almost completed the task in a matter of 10 days, but the restoration of the stable door and its frame will take some time. However, it is exciting to look forward to the prospect of moving into a fresh, new office. Vasia, my secretary, feels that she deserves the new office far more than I do.....but she will just have to keep on dreaming.....

After some inevitable teething problems, our bus is functioning very well indeed. My driver has used her initiative to adjust the routes to be the most practical and fuel-efficient and to save time and money for all concerned. What a star she has proved to be. The children love her to bits and she makes their daily sojourn as pleasant as possible. She was a dream when it came to transporting the children to and from the beach for their outing this term. What a pleasure to be able to take the children on an outing! More stories about their beach experiences at the end of this letter. Our bus driver, Nonhlanhla, has been driving taxis for 15 years and is quite pleased to have a low-key responsibility in her semi-retirement. She stays on at the school during school hours and offers her services, voluntarily, in the kitchen – helping our overworked kitchen staff with the washing of dishes, etc. Our kitchen has had a further upgrade. Liz and Lumka are smiling broadly now, since a ventilation canopy has been erected above the gas stove. We hope that the excruciating temperatures in the kitchen will from now on be a thing of the past.

We have had a plague of mumps, chickenpox and German measles this term. So, many of children’s attendance has been erratic, but we have had a successful journey through the curriculum for this term. It is wonderful to see how confident the children are becoming in their communication of thoughts and ideas

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and to see how successfully the teachers are carrying out their service to the children. Many of our little ones are now feeling confident enough to communicate in English with me and have left me stunned at how well they can verbalise their needs and “complaints” without any need of assistance.

The staff have also nagged enough to get the principal to spring into action to organise staff uniforms. I must admit that we all look very spiffing in our blue logo-ed golf-shirts and all weather jackets. It really does make life much easier in the mornings when it comes to choosing an outfit for the day. We must thank Logo Zone (debbielyn@mweb.co.za – 031-466-1714) for assisting us to find great quality without costing each of us an arm and a leg. I would recommend their services to anyone needing embroidered logos on items of any sort.

Montclair Wimpy has been an awesome blessing to our children this term. They have taken 25 children a month and blessed them with a Wimpy burger and chips and a milkshake and a balloon and a Kiddies Meal toy. The excitement cannot be described when these children return from their treat. One of our little ones did not want to part from his schoolbag once he had packed his toy away for fear that it would disappear before bedtime. We cannot find words effective enough to thank the management and staff of Wimpy for what they are doing for our children. This is a permanent arrangement and next year will see 10 children per month going for their treat.

Specsavers Montclair have also bounced us with a great surprise. They will be testing all our school leavers’ eyes free of charge and will also provide spectacles free of charge to any children who may need them. How awesome is that....and how does one thank them for this kind of generous service?!?

We have also been involved with Soul Action this term. This is a Christian organisation that provides a networking system between ministries that are reaching out to the poor of our communities. They are also involved in providing training to organisations in need of guidance and facilitation in the practical and administrative side of their organisations. We are most honoured to have been approached by Soul Action to be involved in their training courses by giving access to their trainees to our school as a site visit. The first of these will be on Thursday 9 October. We look forward to being able to share with the trainees everything that God has taught us in last 4 ½ years.

And so I come to the end of our term. We are closing doors for the holidays on Fri 19 September and will open again on Monday 6 October. Then it will be a matter of 8 weeks to see us through to the end of the year. That brings me again to our need for donations towards the school leavers’ school shoes. Any donation will be welcomed to help us cover the costs of ~R100 per pair. Please reach into your hearts and pockets and help us to help these precious children.

I close with a final goodbye as the principal of the Udobo Grade R School. Our next newsletter will probably be in a new format to accommodate the growth of our ministry. Thank you to everyone who has been so supportive of the work we have established so solidly here in Montclair. It is your support that has taught me so much about the way in which God works through His people to meet the needs of others. Please continue to give Anne that same and more support as she continues the work in the school. This is not the last you will hear from me, but next time it will be from behind the “*Director’s*” desk! I would appreciate your prayers as I venture forth into this new and challenging realm of the work we foresee taking place on this side of Durban.

Yours Faithfully

**KATHY MERCER
PRINCIPAL**

OUR BEACH STORIES

After numerous warnings of how children become aliens when they are let out on an outing, Teacher Cindy still did not take her principal seriously. Upon arrival at Ansteys beach, she opened the bus doors and released the children from the confinement of the vehicle. When she turned around to give them instructions, she saw her children already swarming towards the water and diving into the waves – fully clothed. She will never ignore my warnings again!!!!

Amahle and Thobeka were two of several children who had never seen the sea before and were absolutely overwhelmed. They refused to budge from the edge of the lawns and played quietly by themselves while the rest of their classmates careered around like wild animals!

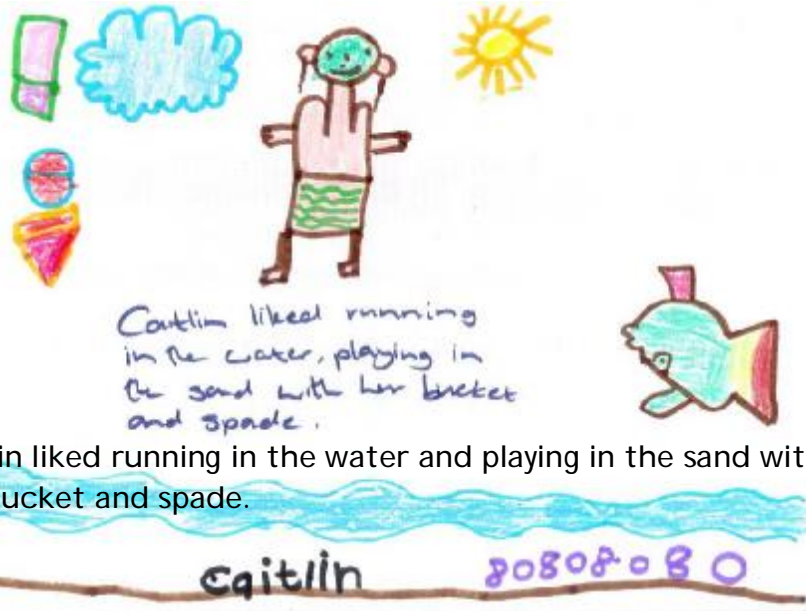
Some of our children were fascinated at the sight of a homeless gentleman taking his early morning shower under the beach showers.

Three of our children learnt the power of the ocean. Olwethu was examining the contents of a rock-pool when a wave crashed behind him and knocked him head-first into the rock-pool! After gasping and regaining his bearings, he found the incident most amusing. Sibusiso discovered that the waves move faster than he can run and found himself knocked flat onto his tummy as the water washed over him. He laughed merrily along with his classmates. Siphephelo was on his knees digging in the wet sand when a wave enveloped him and washed clear over his head!! Again it was the cause of much merriment!

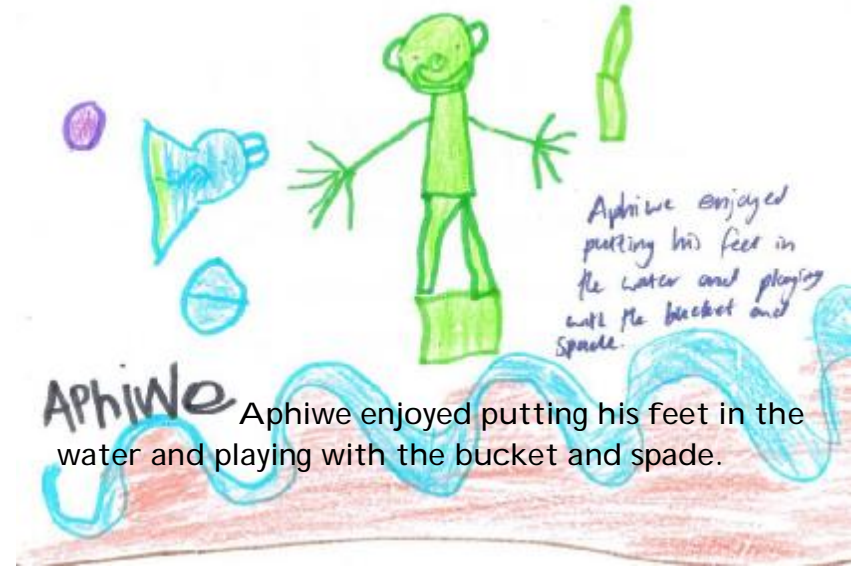
A friendly fisherman voluntarily joined the educational purpose of the outing. He called the children to see as he reeled a real, live fish in. As the poor creature was gasping for survival on the beach, he encouraged the children to touch it and to feel it. Owami was the only one brave enough to reach over to touch the creature. His classmates all held their breath as he reached forward. His little finger poked the fish in its belly. The fish did not take kindly to being poked and reacted by flapping itself skywards. All one saw was a scattering of shrieking children who then refused to come anywhere near the fish again!!!

And finally, Teacher Kathy was given a treasure chest of shells upon each class's return from the beach. They came with such smiles of expectation which then turned to smug satisfaction when they were praised for thinking of their principal and for spoiling her with such wonderful gifts.

Thank you UK Friends of Udobo – without our bus this experience would not have been possible.



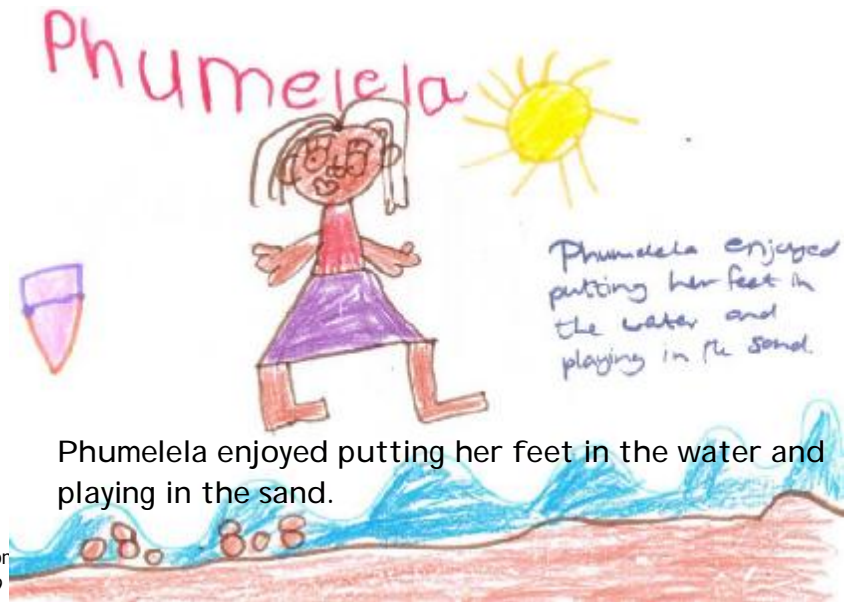
Caitlin liked running in the water and playing in the sand with her bucket and spade.



Aphiwe enjoyed putting his feet in the water and playing with the bucket and spade.



Siphokazi liked putting her hands into the sea water and liked the taste.



Phumelela enjoyed putting her feet in the water and playing in the sand.