

We have had our doors open now for I month, and in one month we have raised sponsorship for 6 children and work is still being done to try and raise more – in fact, with our vision of 50 children, much work still lies ahead of us. At this point, let me thank, once again, those who are sponsoring these children. Your generosity is blessing these children far more than they will ever know. A thank you too, to all who have sponsored and donated in other ways. Without your gifts, this haven would never have come about.

The communities' response to our newspaper articles has been very positive indeed. Many have phoned with well wishes, while others have come on board in a variety of ways. I have a volunteer music teacher, provision of bread and milk for the children, volunteered fundraising efforts, donations of books, toys and equipment and general requests as to how various people and organizations can be of assistance. Thank you all, so much, for this moral support –it has served to keep us focused.

Thoko Majola has also volunteered her services, while waiting for new employment opportunities in the field of Medical Technology as a Medical Technician (Microbiology). She swept into my office like a refreshing wind and got me sorted out in no time. I truly appreciate the initiative she has used and still uses in assisting me whenever she can. My days are made so much easier by her alertness to things that need to be done and her doing these without waiting for instruction. She is also invaluable as my translator in interviews and in the translation of all my paperwork.

Many enquiries from parents with children have been made, but most are only eligible for acceptance next year – so we will continue to wait for the children who have been reserved for the privilege of Gr R this year. I am certain that as “adoption” sponsorship comes in, so the children for whom the adoption is meant, will appear. Please spread the word that applications for 2005 can be made now already.

The children's progress over this month has been something to marvel at. Exposure to stimulation is indeed a wonderful thing. I have been “gob – smacked” at the rate of improvement in cutting skills, fine – motor manipulative skills, gross – motor skills, problem solving skills and especially in their visual interpretation of body image. They are also learning the English language relatively quickly. They understand most of my instructions and are beginning to experiment with communicating verbally in English. Their play is still very vernacular and I am beginning to learn more Zulu than I have in the 4,5 years that I have lived in Durban. They really do enjoy their mornings here and soak up as much as they can before leaving after lunchtime.

They also eat their meals without too much fuss, and my two children from Mhlathuzana Squatter Camp are only too willing to clean up all the plates. The pudding (very generously donated by Mrs. P. Shapiro) is always a good incentive for finishing a meal.

Nombuso Mthiyane has been an invaluable asset as my assistant. She takes a huge interest in everything we do and is a willing learner. She has served as an interpreter in the classroom when I have met with blank stares, but has also understood the importance of the children hearing as much English as possible. She has also proved to be an inspired chef with the minimal provisions available to her. I appreciate the initiative she has shown in the general cleaning and maintenance of the

school. I am truly grateful that I have been surrounded by such incredible people, who keep me inspired and motivated.

There have been several interviews with organizations who have expressed varying degrees of interest in supporting our project and we are now awaiting the outcome of these. I will update in the following issues of Udobo News.

Thus far, the following items have been donated by several members of the community:

- Hand-knitted jerseys and beanies for each of the children
- A very large gazebo to provide shade for the sandpit
- The computer on which this newsletter is being typed
- 2 carpets for the play areas
- toys and equipment
- non-perishable foodstuffs from Gr 2 Botha at Maris Stella
- A fridge from Defy
- A solid oak desk for my office
- Curtains for my office
- A variety of stationery for office and creative
- Filing cabinets
- A bed for the sick-bay

We have truly been blessed in just one month. Hopefully more will be reported in the months to follow.

We have 2 fundraising endeavors on the drawing board for this year and are hoping that they will bring in very large sums of money to feed the trust fund so that the school may become self-supporting and lessen the load on the community.

We have been donated a magnificent charcoal portrait composition by South African artist, Christine Lamberth of Rorke's Drift Lodge and will be selling competition tickets with this piece of work as the winning prize. We are also hoping to organize a local fun-run/walk for later in the year. Please keep these endeavors in your prayers.

Last, but most certainly not least, every Saturday morning a group of faithful members of the Montclair Methodist Church meet on the school property to lift all our needs and keep the staff and children covered in prayer. We have already seen many prayers answered in one way or another and I will remain ever grateful to this group for their support.

In closing, I would like to extend an open invitation to anybody who would like to visit the school and see the children and myself in action, please to do so at any time. The children love to see newcomers and to show off their work.

Proverbs 22:6

Always fishing

Kathy Mercer (Principal)