

THE BEAT

THANK YOU

to all our donors who have so generously given support and funds that have helped to improve the lives of the Alex children. If anyone would like to become a donor or receive the newsletter, please email john@gumboots.org.za or visit our website www.gumboots.org.uk.

SA WEBSITE APPEAL!

Is there anyone out there who has the time, skills and desire to help us update our SA website? It's needing a desperate overhaul.

FUNDING FROM ABROAD

Gumboots UK

The UK team works tirelessly to raise funds – these are made up from monthly donations, once-off larger donations and unique fund-raising methods, such as carboot sales, jewellery-making workshops, handmade clothing sales, as well as bigger fund-raising events. Many thanks for all your hard work. We are particularly grateful to the Trust for Education in the UK that granted us £1 000 for the Ratang Bana food gardening project.

Dave and Janie Lightfoot were successful in the Cape Argus Cycle Race in March... 32500 entrants, 111 gruelling kilometres, 41 degrees centigrade, two heart attacks, 29 serious injuries, 100 hospitalised, 7 000 failed to complete the course, but they did (in their lycra)! More than £4 000 was raised – phenomenal! A huge thanks to all who supported this cause. ●

Well done Janie and Dave!



Kidlinks USA



The Africa Alive Festival last year



South African arts and crafts on display

Thanks to the hard work of Kidlinks, Ratang Bana has had a whole new facelift (see the project info later, as well as a letter from one of the visiting Americans

who worked in the food garden). We are very grateful to all who are involved with Kidlinks for helping to change the lives of Ingrid, her orphans and the grannies.

Kidlinks funds are raised through events, for example South African wine-tasting, craft sales and stalls such as at Madison's Annual African Arts Festival. ●



RATANG BANA

GIFTS THAT MADE THEIR DAY



Over the festive period in December, two organisations collected gifts for Ingrid's orphans that helped to make Christmas time a bit more special:

Gwen's Feeding Scheme has provided 65 cooked meals a week to disadvantaged children over the last year, and the week before Christmas, Aaron, the driver, delivered the usual containers of food plus "Santa's shoeboxes" full of gifts for the children. Each cook knows the family that receives the food, so with that in mind they chose applicable gifts. Apart from the food containers, large vegetable packs and school lunch hampers are also delivered every second week. Through Gwen there have also been very generous donations of new clothes for the children and garden furniture.

Thank you to all Gwen's cooks.

Crown Mag Publishing also went to great lengths to bring joy to Ingrid's children. They prepared 130 Christmas packages: school satchels with stationery; a selection of toiletries for varying age groups; crisps and sweets; spare presents that were donated separately; and a box of toiletries for Ingrid herself. Karen, who came up with the idea of doing this rather than exchanging office gifts, said: "The process has done wonders for office morale with the whole project taking on a life of its own".

On behalf of the children, thank you all for your generosity and initiative in putting together these gifts. You have only to look at the photos to see how much pleasure they gave. ●



Grateful teenagers with their Crown Mag gifts.

Soccer Kits for the Girls' Team

Following a visit early in the year by a UK teacher to the Ratang Bana Girls Football Team (with a friendly game to boot), 40 soccer kits were donated by children at her Portsmouth School. They were brought out in a Gumboots supporter's hand luggage and delivered to the enthusiastic team. For more on this story, go to www.gumboots.org.uk (Facebook). ●



This says it all! →

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RATANG BANA (cont)

The FOOD garden



The team with Liza and Ingrid in the centre of it all

Liza Lightfoot and a team of gardeners from the USA have once again visited SA to work their magic – this time to transform the Ratang Bana new community space into a beautiful food garden where once there was nothing but dust and dirt. The photos show how Ingrid's dream is beginning to come true. One of the team wrote a heartwarming story about the gogos (grannies) who came to help make this dream a reality (read her story at the end of the newsletter).

We have several structures that are helping to make the space take shape: an office for Ingrid; a storeroom; a room for the caretaker, Lymon; the first container is arriving next week for the media centre – many thanks to Vision for Africa/Speed

Space for this generous donation; a shade shelter where the women can rest on a donated bench after working in the garden; and an outdoor kitchen space and equipment for cooking up a meal to share and enjoy the garden produce.



14 of Ingrid's team have been sent on an AgriSeta training to teach them about food gardening – this 6-week course was funded by the Linden Church and we look forward to the benefit that their training will provide.

An incredible workday as a joint community event was carried out one Saturday in April in the garden... under the shade-cover a psychologist was busy working with about 15 mothers and children; 40 or more gogos were planting and tidying up the beds using the 18 cu metres of compost that was piled high in the centre; others were making and planting out a new food bed; children were gathering up and making a new compost area; two men were building new toilets; plumbers were busy with the removal of huge rocks and laying pipes; a team of women were chopping and preparing four potjies (3-legged pots) for lunch that was later served to 70 people - Ingrid led the group in prayer and song before we sat down to the meal. It was an inspirational and simply amazing day. ●



Cabbages for Africa!



SIGIYA SONKE

Latest on the Warehouse saga

Slow but steady progress is being made. At last we have managed to find a fair way of getting the squatters out of the warehouse building, and many have already left. In the downstairs big room, the dance group has cleared out all the mess and debris, we have a new roller door, pedestrian gate and palisade fence so it is much more secure. We are still looking for donors to help us purchase the building before we can implement all the plans and dreams we envisage for the new space. ●

Dancers downstairs in the new space...



watch this space!



Zenzele rehearsing at TDT

Education Update

With the exam results out and the new year well under way, we are happy to report the following success stories...

Deli Letsoela got excellent results at the end of her first year of College studying tourism.

Mboyani Khasake was not coping in the regular stream at the United Church School. With the help of the social worker she is now flourishing at The Foundation School where her special needs are addressed.

Zenzele Letsoela continues to dance with the Tshwane Dance Theatre and is "finding it all a very positive challenge". Esther, the director of the academy, had this to say about his progress: "Zenzele has blossomed and I'm so proud of him. His confidence has grown and he is dancing in all the current productions, including playing Peter in 'Peter and the Wolf' soon."

Zinhle Kolle The good news...

Zinhle passed her matric last year with good grades, and enrolled herself at the Tshwane University of Technology

(TUT) in Pretoria, where she is happily studying Entertainment Technology, specialising in drama / theatre; and she loves her residence where we managed to get free accommodation for her. Many thanks to Barry Kaganson and Urban Nest for their generosity. Zinhle's sms summed up her joy "Thank you so much for the accommodation. I really appreciate it and love it. I promise not to disappoint you. God bless u".

But the bad news followed recently... Zinhle's mother lost her waitressing job, and as the sole breadwinner of 4 children and 1 grandchild, this is devastating. We met Zinhle at the Warehouse where she told us she is unable to pay for the transport to and from TUT and residence. When we asked how she was managing for food, she put her head down as the tears quietly flowed (for us all). We have agreed to pay her transport, food and sundries for the year – and we are hoping that her bursary will be granted soon. If it is not, we will have to dig deep to find ways to help her. What a desperate plight for someone who worked so hard to get where she has.



Zinhle with Beauty, the 'mother' of the group.



SIGIYA SONKE (cont)

UNITED CHURCH SCHOOL

There are currently four children who are sponsored and attend UCS, a private school in Yeoville: **Mateboga Nxumalo** is doing very well academically and received a prize last year for being a counsellor to the pupils and is dancing beautifully.

Puseletso Makhubela is studying hard and doing well in spite of a very difficult situation at home. Both Mathebogo and Puseletso

were funded last year by the Jesus College Cambridge fund for South African education.

Tsholofelo Setlhabi, one of the Kadey Kids, is settling down after a difficult start and is more comfortable and at ease with her studies.

Mzee Mjanju is working hard and has committed himself to support the dance group. ●

PLANS FOR ALEX'S CENTENARY

Jack has great ideas for celebrating the 100 years of Alex. He is planning a performance by the group for some of the Alex community that have not been to the Warehouse – the old people from state institutions. He plans to create a special show for them. He is also organising a Fun Run through Alex that would hopefully become an annual event – there are no such community activities at present. ●

JACK'S INVALUABLE ASSISTANT



Phumlani on the Warehouse's piano.

The dance group is fortunate to have the assistance of **Phumlani Zuma** who helps Jack with administration, training and choreography. He also acts as caretaker of the food garden by living in the small wooden cabin opposite the Warehouse. He is a dedicated young man who is a talented dancer with a professional group, a drummer of note and a skilled self-taught piano player. Jack says, "He is working like a professional teacher. He is a real leader". We had a chat to the quietly confident Phumlani about how he feels about his new role: "I'd like to thank Jack for welcoming me as his assistant. Teaching is what I know best and love. And I thank Gumboots for the support. My hopes are for the Sigiya Sonke children to go far, to perform at a professional level and to understand all about the art industry – dance, singing, musical instruments. I am happy to be doing something to change the attitude of the kids in Alex and to stop them from drinking and smoking – things they do when they don't know what to do with their spare time."

He would like to train them to dance in more performances so that they can be more goal-driven. We are now paying him a small stipend. Thank you, Phumlani for what you do for the dancers. ●



LERATONG

Valete and salvete

Ethel Twalo, one of the tireless teachers, has left Leratong after 12 years. With a family of six children under 13 years, she has needed to find a better-paid job (as a receptionist). This is sad as she was really happy at Leratong and was an excellent teacher. We miss her smiling face.

In her place, Leratong has welcomed **Rose Khalo**, who has made a big impact even in the short time she has

been there. With her great experience, she wants to help the less-trained teachers with educational skills, with lesson preparation and themes for the month (the current theme on the wall and on the interest table was "My Family"). An enthusiastic Peggy said, "Rose is an amazing person with a calling, spending all day in the classroom. She and Dimakatso are doing great things with the older groups." ●

Rose with some of her 5 - 6 year olds.



Sheena's anniversary



Peggy's positive attitude is an example to all.

It's been a hard and painful year for Peggy, particularly this last month with the anniversary of her beloved daughter Sheena's death. Despite this tragic loss, Peggy has continued to devote herself to the running of the school, to managing the Kadey Home and to generally provide never-ending support and wise advice to the Alex community. Peggy is an exceptional role model and, along with our other Gumboots' project leaders, is one of South Africa's unsung heroes. ●

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LERATONG (cont)

The Kadey Home



The possibilities are endless in this new building - thank you Moss.

Thanks to the enormous generosity of Moss Kadey, there are big changes and exciting growth ahead for the Kadey children and the community of Alex. A new building has been bought in Kew, close to Leratong that will provide extra facilities, more security and extended space. It's too early to say exactly how this will be used, but the vision and dreams are big. Moss envisages the following: an expansion to the Kadey Home and Leratong School; an extended learning centre; and a place for skills development. He has plans to completely renovate the space. For the Kadey kids themselves, the year started very badly. Four of them were very sick and Peggy is glad they are now better, "We couldn't have done it without Moss who made it possible for them to go to private doctors and hospitals – and we are grateful for the continued support of Gumboots". The children are all doing well at Summerwood School and received beautiful reports at the end of the first term. ●



The family on the steps of their home - Tholofelo is becoming a little mother to them.

Planting a seed

Peggy and one of the UK trustees met with 14 women from Alex (and one brave man) – they have an idea to start a sewing group. It is still a germ of an idea but we hope that the women would be able to develop their own designs and ultimately sell in craft markets both locally and abroad.

**APPEAL..
APPEAL...**

for this initiative to get off the ground, we are needing sewing machines, new or second hand. If you can help, contact Jenny

082 928 8806

The Women of Alex

A painted flower still remains on my right cheek that was brushed on during my visit to South Africa by an artist from the town where Nelson Mandela was born. The flower stands for peace and happiness and represents to me the women I met in Alexandra during the time our group from America worked on the Ratang Bana garden project. These beautiful women survive and support one another in a situation of great poverty and daily struggle in the crowded living conditions on the fringes of Johannesburg.

On the first day when we came to the garden site, several of the community women were there to meet us. Our group stood on one side facing a line of five or six women opposite us. We were strangers from different continents, economic conditions, cultural backgrounds and races. Over the next days of working together on the garden, we women from America and Alexandra shared our lives and stories. We found out that the grannies have lost children to AIDS and are taking care of their grandchildren. One of the grandmothers told me that she lost three of her children and is now taking care of three young grandchildren. Her son died and then her daughter-in-law, just a few days after giving birth. She spoke about needing to "love the children like your own. Every child needs to feel that they are special and loved." Other grandmothers I talked with confided the hardships of raising another generation of their family. "It's very difficult, but what else can I do?"

By our second morning, the women shared the neighborhood news of the birth of a new baby. Agnes' daughter had given birth to a little girl the previous night. The other exciting news was that Angie's son had matriculated, the equivalent of

passing high school. Warm congratulations and hugs came from us all hearing the good news. Later that day we were invited to Angie's house to meet the new baby and across the street to Christina's home. Their houses are very small and sparse compared to American homes but well kept. Christina had planted some flowers in a tiny patch outside her front door. A bit of beauty created where space is very limited.

Our faithful community of women: Ingrid, Angie, Christina, Agnes, Elizabeth, Gloria, Tanic, Violet and so many others, worked in the hot sun with us to create a garden of hope out of love for the children. These women welcomed us with open arms and shared themselves with us, offering friendship and hospitality to strangers from a hemisphere away. But we are strangers no longer. We are good friends who will not forget what we shared with one another. The garden will be well tended by these women. On our last visit to say final goodbyes, Christina said that every night they have come to water and care for the garden. On the previous night, all work in the garden was done. That night the women just sat and enjoyed being in a beautiful garden, a garden of peace and happiness.

Cathy Schneider

• • • we are strangers no longer.