

There has been no newsletter for a few months unfortunately, but this does not mean that there has been no action around the Gumboots projects! Things are happening in Alex along with the advent of spring and this newsletter brings lots of sunshine, warmth and welcome news. Thank you for all the positive support over the last few months. We look forward to a busy last quarter of the year.

For more information or to become a Gumboots donor, visit our website www.gumboots.org.za or phone Jenny Prangley on 082 928 8806

Sigiya Sonke

The Dance Warehouse

Great things have been afoot at the Warehouse. It has become a wonderful venue to host evenings that showcase the talent of Jack's group. Last week we had another multi-talented show to welcome the group of students from America (see later). Jack and the dancers just get better and better – they now have 8 different dances that have been choreographed by Jack and some of the dancers – and these are being rehearsed for a show at the Market Theatre in November.



The Township Jive is always a winner!

Singing – Dancing – Drumming... it was a very talented performance. If there is anyone who would like to come and bring a bunch of friends, please let us know as the group is always happy to show off what they can do. And snacks and wine are provided!

The Food Garden

We are lucky to have had the team from USA spend some more of their time and energy in Alex. Take one plot of land that has become a dump with rats & rubbish; add 10 students from the Californian Polytech; give them 4 days. And what do

you get?... a beautiful food garden opposite the Warehouse with seedlings and fruit trees that will provide food for the dance group and community in a very short time. It was a miraculous transformation – take a look at the 'before' and 'after' photos! The students brought in a bobcat and removed 20 tons of refuse and rubble. Truck loads of compost were delivered, the land was ploughed and terraced, and then cabbages, beetroot, mealies, potatoes, spinach and carrots were planted.

Our goal is to roll out more food gardens in the area. Thank you to the Kidlinks Team – we are very grateful for all your hard work.



The Food Garden "before"!



And after: baby seedlings a-plenty

Nthabeleng thanks Jack for his efforts

Nthabeleng Koekoe, one of the singers and dancers in the group, made a warm & wonderful speech at the end of their performance...



Nthabeleng: "Jack – the father to all"

"My speech is about how the group has empowered me through my studies by taking me to the multiracial school and I am very thankful for that. The group has taught me discipline to respect the elders whether mother, sister, father, friends, neighbours – they all deserve to gain respect from me. Ladies and gentlemen, I would like you to give a hand of applause to our director Jack Letsoela. He's been a great father to all of us. A shoulder to cry on, and when you have problems he is all ears. It is an honour working with him."

Leratong

The Phetoho Learning Centre

Our main focus of support for Leratong is the children at the school. However, it is impossible not to be aware of the desperate community members on the fringe of the school. As the HIV/AIDS pandemic continues its scourge, more and more child-headed households are becoming apparent on Leratong's doorstep.

Peggy has a dream to help educate some of these children starting in a small and controllable way – so the umbrella project “Phetoho” (meaning “change”) was born. One of the small rooms at Leratong is being turned into a learning centre for child-headed households, where we will have computers and a library. Pheto, who has been helping the Sigiya Sonke kids in their learning centre with IT and maths, will also help these young people in the afternoons. We are also hoping to be able to help these children with school fees, uniforms and books.

As a starting point, Peggy has taken two households under her wing – both of them in desperate need of practical and financial support (see below). These children have all been helping to paint and set up the learning centre in preparation for the opening.

SUPPORT & DONATIONS NEEDED
for computers, desks, university and school fees and transport.

Thokozani & Khanyisile

I met this brother and sister in the Leratong classroom. They live in a flat behind the school – 10 of them with one breadwinner, their oldest sister. The usual story unfolded: absent father, and mother who died 2 years ago (this time in a taxi accident). Thokozani (21) says, “Our mother wanted us

to become something, so that's what motivates me. I chose not to become another statistic of township youth”. So when he finished matric last year, he set his sights on doing Logistics Management at UJ (University of Johannesburg). Lucky for him, Peggy decided that she would pay for his fees and transport out of her own pocket for this year. He is doing well in his course but says that “Sometimes I feel guilty that I am not contributing to the household more”.



Thokozani & Khanyisile with the potato bushes in the Leratong garden

Khanyisile (18) is doing matric now and is desperately hoping to join her brother to study Human Resources. She brought tears to my eyes as she said “My dreams are to make a difference in other's lives – it's not about me only. I want to motivate up-and-coming young people in the township”.

I was so impressed by how articulate and passionate they both were, and hope we can find a way to help them with their studies.

This is the youth that Gumboots needs to support and encourage if we are to make a difference.

Velani & Prince

Peggy found these two brothers a few months ago living in a dustbin near Leratong. Both their parents had died and they had no family support. A small room was empty at the school, and there was no choice but to make this available for the boys. Velani has finished his matric and Prince is in grade 11. What they have is not much – they are fed and housed at Leratong for now – but their needs are great.

The school food garden

This is looking good! Lots of cabbages, spinach and lettuce are growing under the care of Obed (see photo). The peach trees are huge and are full of promising blossom. The chickens are less hopeful – only 4 old scrawny hens have survived and the kids gather only a few eggs a day.



Cabbages and Kings



The Kodyx under the peach tree in the garden

Ratang Bana Bana

Ingrid Mloi is the amazing backbone of this project. Together with Mary Radebe and a small team of volunteers she is making a difference to hundreds of lives. But Ingrid is finding her work very challenging at the moment. Like Peggy at Leratong, she finds it really painful to deal with the many child-headed households. She is angered that the parents with no education and no skills can die and leave their poor children without having planned for their futures.

"They die leaving their children with no birth certificates, and leaving others to try to get grants for them", she said. "I would like to educate the parents while they are alive. Let me be unique and get them to come for education programmes, like family planning and skills development before they leave their children". She was particularly upset by one family of 10 who have been recently orphaned (see right).

The Ngubane family

When Ingrid was discharged from hospital earlier this year, the woman in the opposite bed asked her to visit her children to tell them that she would be home soon. Ingrid found 10 siblings, ranging from 2 - 23 in one tiny shack-room.

The following day they got the news that their mother had died. What a desperate situation – no food, not one of them working, no nappies for the toddler. They showed me where they sleep – 4 in the double bed and 6 on the floor. An "intruder" (as they call him) is also sleeping in the room. Ingrid has found them blankets and gets a food parcel to them each month, and she is beginning the long process of trying to get them birth certificates so they can qualify for the foster grant.



Five of the Ngubane family outside their room

"We can give children food - but what about the source of the problem?"



Ingrid serves up a Sunday feast!



And the left-overs are given to her orphan friends

Other projects

THE KADEY KIDS

Peggy has moved into the Kadey Home to give added support for a while. "I want to help put into place systems for the future so that the home is sustainable", she says.

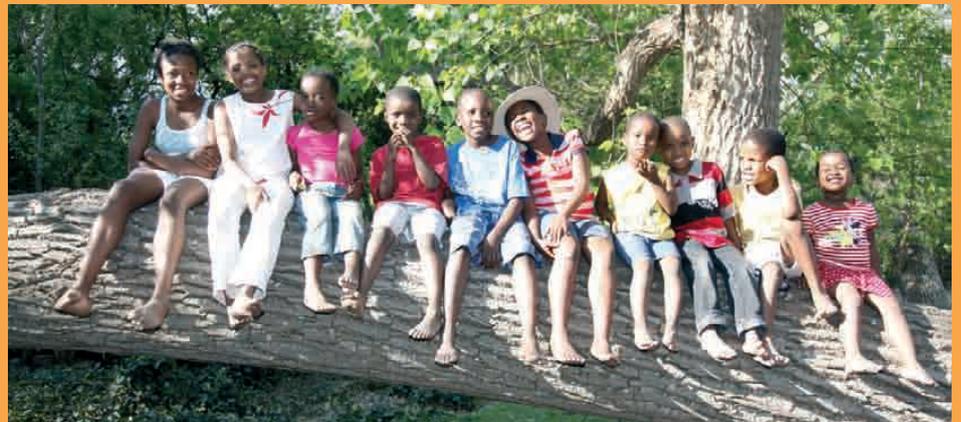
When I visited the Home, I had to make my way through the usual sangomas camping in the yard for their graduation ceremony. The drums had been beating for 4 days and nights – fortunately I didn't have to see the 6 goats that were slaughtered this time. I found Peggy sorting out the medication for the kids in the new dining room – on the big newly varnished table. The Home is looking really lovely with the new dormitory furnished for the 3 girls (and Peggy).



Peggy & Mpho on the steps of the new additions

Delta Park picnic

The new adventure playground at Delta is a wonderful place for a picnic – the photos say it all.



Laughter on a large log



Tshulofelo – the oldest 'sister' had a wonderful day



Buhle doing his best in the rounders match

APPEAL

Is there anyone out there who would like to help take these 7 children for outings? Joe (the driver) and one of the house mothers would bring them to a venue of your choice: a park, the zoo, a movie. Gumboots would help with any costs. They are in great need of stimulation and entertainment that would get them out of their confined surroundings.

Thank you donors!

In John's words: "On behalf of the beneficiaries of our projects, thank you all for the enormous effort that you put into raising funds that keep these projects afloat. As volunteers with all the many other demands on your time, we understand that it is not always easy. For us at this end who have the benefit and privilege of interacting at ground level with the people of Alex, it is much easier to be motivated and to appreciate the need for support... for those of you further away (for some it's 10 000 miles), it is much more difficult, and we are therefore especially grateful."