Siyakhulisa Abantwana

We are Nurturing the Children

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Dear Friends, September 2010

We have lots of news so I shall drop the formalities and get on with the task of updating you. Let's deal with the "not such good news" first shall we?

The situation at the Mary Coetzee Foster Homes.

As you all know, we have been keeping an eye on the orphans at the Mary Coetzee Foster Homes and I have stayed on the Executive Committee of Child Welfare for this very reason and just as well. Otherwise I would not have been aware that the monthly Government subsidy towards the running costs of these 3 homes has come to an abrupt end. Child Welfare are back in the situation where they only receive foster and child support grants for some of the children and after paying the salaries of the three foster mothers there is very little left for food and other basic needs for 20 plus children.

Hence, you will all understand why the Siyakhulisa Trustees have decided that we need to subsidize the monthly grocery bill at the Mary Coetzee Homes. I will do the shopping twice a month and have already done the first one – evidence alongside. (Rosalee and I with 4 of the very happy beneficiaries).

You are probably wondering how the Department of Social Welfare could suddenly withdraw its promised support of a house full of orphans such as this. Unfortunately we do not have the answers and can only shake our heads in disbelief. Perhaps the enormous spending on the 2010 World Cup has emptied the coffers. Although we're all for using sport to bring a nation together as the World Cup certainly did, it should not be at the expense of starving children.

Siyakhulisa's foster home plans shelved

The afore-mentioned events at the existing foster homes has meant that we have needed to shelve our plans to start another foster home. The 20 children in the three Mary Coetzee houses have been moved into two houses to cut down on costs and the payment of a foster mother. So already there is a house standing vacant because of insufficient running costs and Siyakhulisa would rather see if we can assist Child Welfare to re-open the third house so that they can continue to take in orphaned children.

What about our plans to open a home for babies with AIDS?

This plan has not only been shelved but will probably never materialise. We have been advised against it by the local Hospice Organisation because of the complexities of our plan. They tell us that no matter how ill the babies are, there is always some family member who will not part with the child (albeit just so they can receive the government grant). Furthermore, although most of these babies are destined to die at an early age, things could turn nasty if we don't have a qualified nurse taking care of them and they die in our care. Unfortunately, as much as we would like to give these babies some quality of life in their last days, we are not looking for complicated and expensive lawsuits.

Now for all the good news!

Visit by American teachers

In August we were delighted to have Kris Haslund and Connie Wees, two teachers from Minnesota, pay us a visit. They were especially keen to spend some time with the children at the Mary Coetzee Foster Homes which resulted in an afternoon of immense fun. Connie has a special talent, that of turning balloons into animals, especially sausage dogs, and the children watched in delight. Each child also received two very special pencils. These teachers also brought along with them a donation of R1400 from the Elementary Student Council of Capitol Gifted Magnet School where they teach, collected by selling pencils from a vending machine. We are exceptionally grateful for this donation which was immediately earmarked for groceries for the children who took so much delight in Kris and Connie's visit. Thank you both very much, also for the educational materials you left for us to use, and we hope to see you back here in the not too distant future.

A volunteer teacher from across the sea!

Speaking of teachers, we have some more wonderful news. Alice Rawecki, a recently retired teacher from Toronto, Canada has always been a great supporter of Siyakhulisa and has especially taken an interest in and contributed towards the welfare of the orphans at the Mary Coetzee Homes. Alice is presently hard at work planning her trip to South Africa from January to March next year. She has very kindly volunteered to come and teach English at one our schools during that time and we have just the right place for her. William Oates Primary School is in desperate need of teachers, especially English teachers. Although Alice is doing this because she feels she would like to give something to the less fortunate children of Somerset East, we are aware of and appreciate the huge sacrifice she is making. In the afternoons Alice is hoping to walk round to the Children's Home which is nearby and assist the orphans with their English homework. Words cannot describe what this act of kindness is going to mean to the children who will be fortunate enough to experience Alice's dedication and love of children.

Education Focus

With all the goings on lately on the education front, Siyakhulisa will continue to look out for opportunities to assist educational institutions and promising pupils. We have mentioned before about the bursary fund which we have established and that will be implemented next year. The search is on for a deserving candidate.

Our assurance

With circumstances changing as they have, our plans for the future have also had to change. However we assure you, our friends, that the matter of where and how we use your donations will always receive the most careful deliberation and, as always, every cent WILL go directly towards the welfare of the children. We are proud of our "minimum admin costs" policy. The only admin costs we do have are lawyers fees for auditing our books, which reminds me that this has just recently been completed and anyone wishing to see a copy of our financial statements just needs to drop me an email.

To end off, once again our heartfelt thanks for your support and donations. We know you will never stop caring.
Our sincere regards,
Lynne Brown
and on behalf of Dr Alan Russell and Sr Rosalee Bradfield