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Dear Friends of Siyakhulisa,

Much has happened since our September newsletter so lots of exciting news to report!

First an update on the situation at the Mary Coetzee Foster Homes which our "caring" Department of Welfare left high and dry last year. Our grateful thanks to those of you who stepped up to the plate and made it possible for us to help out with groceries when it was necessary. For the past few months we were not required to subsidize the food bill because suddenly the government found some hidden funds and was able to pick up the tab for a while, however those funds are now spent so we will need to come to the rescue again. In January it gave us much pleasure to be able to buy all the school requirements for the children in the home,

school uniforms and stationery, which Child Welfare did not have the finances to do. It is such a delight to see these children proudly wearing their uniforms and being properly equipped for school. Focusing on education—Full steam ahead!

As mentioned in our previous newsletter, due to financial constraints, our focus has had to change from building

foster homes to focusing on education where we feel the need is greater and helping out is do-able. Luckily we are a small enough foundation that is able to step back, see where the gaps are and embark on operation emergency plugging: even if it does mean changing direction. The need is most definitely in education and if we can help just a few children to better their lives and become an asset to this country, our goal will have been achieved. Confirmation that we are on the right track was evident during the events of the past few weeks. We told you last newsletter about retired teacher from Toronto, Alice Rawecki, coming out to volunteer at our poorest of poor

schools here in Somerset East, namely William Oates Public School. Now we're proud to announce that it is all done and dusted and was a success that exceeded all expectations. Alice was scheduled to teach English to the Grade 7s only, but one or two periods a day was definitely not going to go down well with busy-bee Alice. The school is short of teachers so every period she would look for the class not attended by a teacher and take over, doing activities with them, heaven only knows how as the younger classes do not understand much English! On her arrival at the school Alice was both horrified and amazed by a number of things, not the least of being the 90 Grade 5 learners crammed into one class! She soon learned that that is the way things are done in some of our schools and it's a case of make do or do nothing. The school also has no teaching resources so the teachers really struggle. Fortunately before Alice left Canada her school, Wedgewood, had a fund-raising drive selling wristbands and Alice was able to bring out



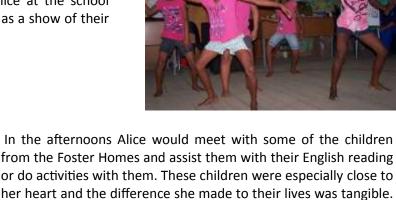
boards, and all the materials that go with them. These were well

overwhelming appreciation.

children from the orphanage attend William Oates School, being a no-fees school, and Siyakhulisa's focus is now on education, we decided to spend this money on resources for the school. The teachers made a list of their most important needs, which are too numerous to mention here, and a plan was put into action to have 250 chair bags made for the junior primary classes, thereby also creating some temporary employment for 2 of our unemployed local residents who could sew the bags. received at the farewell concert put on for Alice at the school

a tidy sum of donations not only from this drive but also from her friends and friends of Dr Alan Russell. Because a number of the

where each class performed a stage act for her as a show of their



Much more needed at William Oates Public School: The resources we have added to the school will make the lives of the teachers and pupils a lot easier and conditions more conducive to better education. However the school is also desperately in need of at least two more classrooms. The school no longer has a staff room, principal's office or hall as these have all been converted to classrooms. We

have got quotes on building two prefab type classrooms and a minimum of R350 000 would be required. A lot of

more volunteer teachers to come out and do the kind of good work that Alice has done.

money but we're not giving up yet and any assistance would be hugely appreciated.

on behalf of Siyakhulisa Trustees Dr Alan Russell, Rosalee Bradfield and myself

Thank you Alice and all those who contributed to the donation she was able to make! We have co-opted Alice onto Siyakhulisa's working committee as she plans to drive a program whereby we will try to get funding from Canada for

She will be sorely missed.

The Sarah Holland Bursary Fund

You will remember that we established this fund after Sarah Holland died in a fire which razed the orphanage that she ran in Newcastle, Kwa-Zulu Natal. We used the bursary fund this year to pay the registration fee of R4000 for a first year university student, Niki Jansen, who has grown up in a foster home and experienced the challenges of foster care first hand. He has a strong desire to become a social welfare worker so that he can assist other children growing up in the same circumstances. Luckily the government is keen to encourage studies in social welfare and should pay the remainder of his fees for the next three years. Niki has undertaken to pay back our bursary once he is

university with keen interest.

earning and can afford to. He achieved excellent results in Grade 12 last year and we shall watch his progress at For next year at least three Grade 7 pupils have been identified as having the potential to go far. Unfortunately with their home circumstances being so poor they are not likely to have the opportunity to attend a school where the teaching they receive will bring out the best in them. This tells us we need to extend our bursary program to be able to offer more bursaries. These children have 5 years of high school ahead of them. Wouldn't it be great to send them to our best school and maybe even watch them become university material? Given the right conditions they all have the potential. We'd love to hear from any good Samaritans who may like to sponsor one of these students. Fees per pupil per year are around R7200.

So these are Siyakhulisa's plans for the forth coming year. However with circumstances changing as they do there are no guarantees that our plans won't have to change too, as we discover gaps that need urgent filling and ways where we can make a difference. We assure our donors and interested friends that we will continue to keep our ears to the ground and the funds which you have so generously helped us to collect will only be spent after careful consideration and deliberation. We would love to hear your comments, good or bad. We wish you and yours a wonderful year ahead. Lynne Brown

Letter from Alice: March 9, 2011

first introduced to the Siyakhulisa Abantwana Foundation through Dr. A. Russell, from Brampton, Ontario, Canada. I took a

Much of my time was spent in Somerset East. Here, I found a diverse community working with pride and commitment, just as I

No, matter which class I taught, the children's facial expressions were true indicators that they were there to learn! Despite the

For the last few years, I have had an interest in learning about the people of South Africa. It doesn't seem that long ago when I was

raiser at Wedgewood Public Elementary in Toronto, Ontario Canada.

An Incredible Journey to South Africa

personal interest and began making a financial donation to the foundation. Then this past school term I was able to set up a fund The funds raised afforded William Oates Primary School to receive 250 chair bags, nine easels, markers and chart paper. This supplied all of the phase one and primary grades. Mr. Du Plessis, staff and students were presented with this gift in a farewell

limited teaching supplies and lack of furniture, the students managed by helping each other and the lessons were completed. Both the support and teaching staff at William Oates demonstrated professionalism in seeing that the students received the best in regards with their academic and social development. These children truly shone!

Lynne Brown provided food and lodging at their home.

observed at William Oates Primary School.

assembly February 18th 2011.

people in Somerset East.

THANK YOU!

The lack of resources and hardware supplies prevents the teachers from enriching the program. The children from the Mary Coetzee Children's Home were amazing! Each day they came over to the Child Welfare office where I was able to engage them in academic and creative activity. The personal attention and their delight in activity could be heard throughout the facility. Their command of English excelled and their smiles increased! The sadness came when we had our last session, where we said our good byes, but I hope that they all will have good memories of their time at the office.

This trip would have been far more expensive and perhaps impossible if it hadn't been for the generosity of some very special

Ken and Lynne Brown, were instrumental in finding William Oates Primary School as a placement for me. Mr. Brown, went to great length in getting me a vehicle, "an automatic one" at that! This made my daily trip to school more comfortable. Mr. Billy Botha at Status Toyota donated the car while I was teaching. My accommodation during the week was provided by Bob and Diana Orchard. They donated their guest house for the entire stay in Somerset. A BIG THANK-YOU! On the week ends Ken and

The town's people always greeted me with pleasantries and the community, expressed their thanks for coming all the way to South Africa, so that children might have extra learning opportunities and the teachers have an extra resource on hand. My work at the Children's home and at William Oates, has filled my heart with pride as I presented them with the Canadian Flag. This truly is a sign that where there is love, there is peace, where there is peace there is growth for an international community to

Last but not least, to my friend from Canada who said, "Hakuna Matata-no worries!"

develop. Let this thread of communication continue, so that the lives within this community can benefit.

The children greeted me daily at the crosswalk and showed keenness and a yen for learning.

Until the next time, Sincerely, Alice Rawecki. From Brampton Ontario, Canada.

To Ken and Lynne Brown, and Dr. A Russell, who showed me the way to South Africa, and made this first trip a huge success!

To the community at large, grow and prosper for the good of humanity. May your children grow and become strong leaders.