

# Ukuthasa News

Spring 2017

## Choices House: from crisis support to volunteer hostel accommodation



Choices House underwent a makeover to receive the new tenants: The whole interior of the house was painted and rewired, the large bathroom became two shower and WC rooms and new blinds, curtains and kitchen equipment were fitted. Also, lots of high quality items were donated.

### In recent months, the Choices Centre has gone through some changes. Here, Nicky Welsh, Ukuthasa project worker, gives us a few updates.

In June 2016 the **Choices Management Team** decided to close the Residential Unit.

Since the year 2000, the Unit had accommodated up to six women at a time, plus a unit coordinator. For almost 15 years the unit had been full, often with a waiting list, providing a safe, secure and supported environment during the third trimester of pregnancy for women choosing adoption for their babies and aiming to assist them through the birth and adoption process.

From the beginning of 2015 we saw a significant drop in applications from Social workers to place women in the unit. When we made enquiries in other areas of South Africa we found that there were indications that the stigma experienced by women choosing adoption had significantly reduced. In addition, termination of pregnancies seem to be occurring much earlier, often before a pregnancy is medically confirmed. As we saw the unit remain under-occupied or empty for the first time since it was opened, we realised that there was no longer a requirement for this facility in our area, which seemed to match the trend around the country.

**The Unit** had served hundreds of women over the years but now seemed redundant.

We investigated various options for letting the building either privately or commercially and we spent some time exploring

possible lettings that proved not to be viable. Having expended a great deal of time and effort with little result, we decided to let the rooms ourselves to project volunteers working or volunteering for local charities and projects. Before we had time to advertise, we had 4 possible tenants registering an interest in the accommodation but by that time, because we were pursuing commercial options, we had cleared the house of its contents!

So, we then set about making some internal changes to the house and equipping the communal living areas. We received a generous donation through **Ukuthasa**, which enabled us to change and upgrade the bathrooms and during that process it was discovered that the electric system badly needed an upgrade in order to meet building health and safety regulatory requirements. Two members of Urban Voice church (the church owns the land and the **Choices building**) gave their time as a gift and were able to upgrade the electrics and provide a safer supply and intake system. On 1 February 2017 our first tenants moved in. As I write this article, we still have one vacant room but the tenants' rental income is already providing a long-term sustainable income to **Choices**.

**Counselling and life-skills education** remain the core services at **Choices** and the team continue to focus on these areas. We feel extremely privileged to be able to make a positive impact in our local communities. If you would like to support this project, please contact [Laia@ukuthasa.org](mailto:Laia@ukuthasa.org).  
**Nicky Welsh, April 2017.**

# Projects in the Spotlight

## The Helderberg Academy: Egyptian Adventures



**At the end of February, Beth and her husband Llewellyn were invited to coach rugby on behalf of the Helderberg Academy in Egypt, where rugby is a sport still in its development stages but it's growing quickly.**

Beth tells us a bit about her experience there: "Women's rugby is in the early stages of development there and so we coached life skills through rugby, fitness and kick boxing over a weekend training camp. There were three teams represented from the total four in Cairo and the surrounding areas, and they were very grateful to have us there. It was so interesting for us to go and experience a new culture and way of doing things. We were so encouraged by these girls in their 20's that were not afraid to go against the cultural norm and play contact rugby. They had so much passion for the game and a huge willingness to learn and improve. Whilst we were there, we were teaching about decision making and taking responsibility, among other skills."

"Although it is not unusual for girls to be involved in sports, they are not encouraged to play contact sports like rugby. In many cases, their parents won't allow them to play as they think contact rugby is too aggressive and harmful to the girls. In the Egyptian society, the place of a woman is generally at home to serve her husband, and be gentle and kind, which doesn't fit with the image of a woman playing contact rugby. There is also the general belief that if you are a woman playing a contact sport, then you are homosexual."

"I think this perception is one that needs to be broken. You can still be strong and good at contact sport and still be lady like", says Beth.

## Dyllan's Story

The **Helderberg Academy**, based in Somerset-West, South Africa, was founded in 2012 by Beth Veenendaal with a heart of empowering and teaching life skills through sports in underprivileged communities. It is aimed for boys and girls between 8 and 16 years old and currently benefits between 90 – 100 children every week. When these children arrive for the first time at the Helderberg Academy, they often lack self-esteem, direction, discipline and motivation, and most of them face very difficult home situations and struggle at school. The **Helderberg Academy** aims to offer them a place to play, to respect and be respected and to learn about competition and team work.

One of the ways to reach this goal is through leadership development, where children can learn to be role-models in their communities by having the opportunity of being leaders and coaches themselves. This teaches them about decision making, taking responsibility and empathy. It also improves their employability skills.

This has been true in Dyllan's case as he was a student on the **Helderberg Academy** and has now been employed as an Intern.

*My name is Dyllan, I'm from Macassar. I used to abuse alcohol and drugs and my life was going nowhere. In 2012 I met Beth from the U.K who runs the Helderberg Academy. She invited me and a few friends to join the academy while we were still living in a bad way. I was part of the academy for 3-4 years, and while I was there I learned not just how to play rugby but more about God and got closer to him. But then I became too*



# Get a Glimpse...

## Children welcome their new Jungle Gym

“Play is the only way the highest intelligence of humankind can unfold”-

Joseph Chilton Pearce



Hours of fun and healthy development await the children at Emyezweni as a Jungle Gym is installed in their playground.

**Emyezweni School** provides early education to children between 2 and 6 years old in the Lwandle township, in the Western Cape of South Africa. At **Emyezweni**, children that might otherwise not go to school due to their parents not being able to pay school fees, learn how to read and write, get to go on educational visits and receive an overall solid foundation for their future education.

Earlier this year, the children were delighted when they found out that they were getting a new piece of equipment for their playground, a **Jungle Gym**! Here are some of the comments (translated) made by the children : “Very excited to play”, “I can’t wait!”, “It is so good”, “we have our own play area!”.

For the school, this is a very exciting moment, as that means that the children will no longer need to go to the local jungle gyms, which sometimes are not very safe, with broken glass or needles around them. “Now, the areas in our Physical Education curriculum can safely be covered as we help the children with motor skills”, says Rachel, **Emyezweni**’s administrative assistant, “and playtimes have become more fun!”.

old to be part of the academy and that was the sad part, as the Academy actually lead me to the decision to change my life. Then one day Beth asked me if I wanted to help out at the Academy as a volunteer.



I said yes and so I worked as a volunteer for a while, then she offered me a three month contract just to see how it goes.

Shortly after that I signed another contract and now am part of the **Helderberg Academy Team** as office staff and as a Coach teaching life skills. I owe so much to the **Helderberg Academy** for all they have done for me, from when I was a young guy, to the strong man I am today. I am so grateful to the Academy, Beth and the team for all they have done for me and all they have invested in me.”

The Helderberg Academy is looking for an intern from the UK for January 2018 until December 2018. If you love sport and would like to make a difference in the lives of young people, please get in touch with Beth at: [Beth@helderbergacademy.co.za](mailto:Beth@helderbergacademy.co.za).



# Stay connected...

## We have a new website!

We are delighted to officially announce the launch of our newly designed **website**.

Please, have a look to find out more about our news, projects and more!

As a new feature, we now have an online **gift shop**, where you can buy, among other things, school material for Emyezweni, starter baby packs for pregnant mums at Choices or Award gifts for the most improved boy or girl at Helderberg Academy!

You can also purchase online any of our handmade jewellery and Christmas decorations.

Come and have a look!

**NEW WEBSITE!**



There are many ways you can support **Ukuthasa**, including using the following fundraising websites:

[www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk):

Shop online from major stores who donate a percentage of each sale to charity.

[www.recycle4charity.co.uk](http://www.recycle4charity.co.uk):

Recycle your old mobile phones & ink cartridges.

[www.everyclick.com](http://www.everyclick.com):

A search engine that donates to charity 1p for every search you make.

[www.justgiving.com](http://www.justgiving.com):

Make a credit card donation directly to **Ukuthasa**. It is quick, easy and anonymous.

If you are on **Facebook**, remember to like and share our page!



**Talk to us:** For further enquiries, correspondence updates or feedback - please contact Laia Martinez at: