

Ukuthasa Newsletter

Encouraging local communities in Africa



Issue 24

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Beth Blackmur, 18, shares memories of her recent visit to South Africa

Ukuthasa has very much been a part of my family's life over the last 13 years. Dad has been a trustee from the start and, as you may have read in the last newsletter, is still very much enjoying his involvement.

I was delighted to have been given the chance to visit South Africa this Summer, to spend two months with Gary and Nicky, who founded the charity, and to witness first hand the work they do and the projects in which Ukuthasa is involved.

It was great meeting the team at **Hope2educate**. They run workshops in four schools in Cato Manor, near Durban, teaching young people how to make good life decisions and getting them involved in their local communities. The purpose of the project is to raise awareness of the dangers of HIV/Aids. I helped the team with some marketing material – making newsletter templates, posters and flyers – and I also visited the schools. I wasn't prepared for how welcoming and friendly the kids would be. I couldn't help but compare them to schools back home, where there's such little respect for authority. In South Africa, most of the kids have next to nothing, some don't even have families, yet they were so polite – they smiled, shook my hand, some even hugged me and it was all so genuine. The students absolutely love the weekly workshops and get so much out of them. I filmed my visits to the schools and edited a short film for Ukuthasa to use for marketing and fundraising purposes.

I was fortunate to accompany Gary and Nicky to **Zambia** for a church conference, which was incredible! I wasn't expecting the country to be so rural – it's exactly how you picture Africa: red dusty paths and little wooden houses.

The church, so different from anything I've ever been to, was held in an old tent, which got so hot in the middle of the day because the sun was right overhead. The people were incredibly hospitable and made us feel so welcome. I had the opportunity to meet some of the many young orphans the church look after... It was quite emotional as they came rushing up to me, clinging on to my legs and giving me big hugs! One girl was holding on to my arm and appeared to be trying to figure out why it was different to hers. It made me realise just how much I've taken for granted the multi-cultural society we live in in Britain.



While in South Africa I also visited **Project O**, a charity run by Martin and Vashti Downs that helps orphans in the Valley of a Thousand Hills. I went with the staff and other volunteers, delivering food to the children sponsored through the project. I met some remarkable people, including a 16-year-old girl with a mental disability who was sitting on the floor, slightly covered by a small roof made from metal and wood scraps. The ground underneath her was almost sculpted around her and later I learned that she had been sitting in that same place for almost her entire life.

I also visited a couple of homeless shelters in Durban. Nothing could prepare me for what I would see: a big warehouse room, the smell of weed and urine mixed together and hundreds of filled beds placed in rows. Many of the people, like a lady I met called Patience, had been living in the shelter for six months or more with no family and nowhere to go. Such a horrid existence, but for many the shelter is everything.

In August I took the long journey over five days to Somerset West with Gary and Nicky and helped them move back into their home there. In the Cape, I visited **Emyezweni** which was so exciting! The kids are absolutely adorable and it was great meeting the boy I sponsor. I was honoured to accompany Grade R to The Spur Restaurant. For many of these six-year-olds, this was their first (but hopefully not their last) opportunity to visit a restaurant. I also visited the Learn to Earn project, based in Khayelitsha Township. It's an organisation that helps equip unemployed people for work, running courses like sewing, woodwork and graphic design. They also run a basic computer course that introduces people to the world of computers.

The **Ukuthasa Peer Education** project team made me most welcome when I accompanied them into a secondary school. There I did some filming and interviewed the guys who run the project. It's been going for five years and is running really well! They go to six schools, teach the kids life skills and make them more aware of the dangers of HIV/Aids. Like the workshops run by Hope2educate, the kids really appreciate them.



I very much enjoyed my time in South Africa. It was a life-changing experience and one I will never forget. I feel privileged that I was able to meet so many amazing people and visit some of the projects that Ukuthasa is involved in. If I was given the opportunity, I'd do it all over again

To all individuals, families, groups, schools, companies and churches who support us regularly in so many ways, we want to say a huge thank you. Without your support, our life-changing work would not be possible

A return to the Cape

Gary and Nicky Welsh, the founders of Ukuthasa, have returned to their home in the Western Cape of South Africa after almost three years in Durban, Kwazulu Natal (KZN). While there, Hope2educate, a second Peer Education Project, was launched, a great deal of HIV development and training was accomplished and a feasibility study looking at rural health issues was commissioned and completed. We plan to follow up the study with some weekend community health events in KZN, which Ukuthasa will sponsor in partnership with other local community organisations.

'KZN was amazing and we will continue to be involved in the projects there,' says Nicky. 'We already miss the many friends we made during our time in Durban, but it is good to be back in the Cape!'

Encouraging self-sufficiency for families in Zambia

Ukuthasa is pleased to support two small-scale livestock projects in Zambia: a chicken project in Sikaunzwe and a pig project in Limalunga. For just £300, the chicken project was started with one cock, 15 hens, a shelter and some feed. The pig project – three sows, one boar and material for a shelter – cost only £500. Plans are to develop a small-scale model that can be replicated and managed by two people. If the model proves to be successful, the plan is to help other families with start-up costs over a one-year period. The costs would be paid back through the sale of livestock. In this way we hope to help families to feed themselves and create wealth.

Can you help by sponsoring a pig or a chicken?

If so please contact Sue Whittaker (details on page 4)

News from Emyezweni

Deb Gregory, Grade R teacher and manager at the Emyezweni pre-school in the Western Cape of South Africa, gives an update on recent developments...

Grade 3 and beyond...

We currently have 89 children in the school between the ages of two and eight. In response to requests from parents over the past three years, we have kept on the children in the oldest class and taken them into the next grade, which is an exciting development. This year we have reached our limit in our current building and are looking for land on which to build a full primary school. We are also looking for another teacher for the grade 3 class. Ideally, this would be a volunteer position and I've been busy contacting people from the UK who may be interested in the post. Our dream is to develop a new class each year until we reach grade 7 and the children are ready to start high school.

Some friends from the UK are fundraising for us, and our manager Charl Du Plessis is investing lots of time and energy in finding us a plot of land. As the school grows, so does our impact and influence in the local community, and the extended time we are given with each child in our care means we can develop education in Lwandle more fully.

Volunteers...

Emyezweni continues to benefit from the relationship we have developed with a South African travel organisation called Travel SA. We've received six overseas volunteers so far this year who have worked in school for one to three months, and the children have loved learning about their homes and different cultures. The staff have enjoyed making new friends, and the volunteers have all loved working with the wonderful children at Emyezweni. During September we also had the pleasure of a visit from Beth Blackmur from the UK... Beth helped out in each class, came on the grade R outing and made a special film for the people who sponsor children in the Grade R class.

Grade R trip to Spur...

This term Grade R had an outing to a restaurant as part of their work on food. The children were excited and had a great time. Without the Ukuthasa Child Sponsorship Scheme, this outing and others would not be possible, so thank you once again to our sponsors.



Medical screening...

All the Emyezweni children benefit from regular medical screening and care from our school doctor Dr Susan Bingham. This means we can catch medical problems quickly and access treatment not available to most South Africans. Through our connections with Dr Bingham and our Early Years network, we're involved with a programme run by medical students from the University of Cape Town, which will benefit 500 children in the communities of Lwandle and Nomzamo. This is a pilot programme, which will be initially run in Emyezweni, then extended to other pre-schools

Child Sponsorship

If you would like to sponsor a Grade R child for the 2010 school (calendar) year, please contact Sue Whittaker (contact details over)

Full sponsorship	£25 per month
Co-sponsorship	£12.50 month

Teenagers and the fight against HIV



*One of Ukuthasa's goals is to play a part in life-changing programmes that will help reduce the spread of HIV/Aids. The **Ukuthasa Peer Education Programme** is now in its fifth year. Ukuthasa continues its partnership with the charity GoLD and*

Helderberg Christian Church, working with teenagers in secondary schools in The Western Cape. Charmaine Etson, project leader, reports...

We're excited to have been asked by GoLD to pilot a Track 4 project, which employs two Lead Peer Educators (teenage Peer Educators who've completed the standard three-year programme). GoLD provides support throughout the year, which includes 30 days of intensive training in the area of HIV/AIDS, media presentation skills and camp training. As part of the training, the teenagers were invited to take part in a photo shoot wearing new, fashionable clothes, which – much to their delight – they were allowed to keep.

Our Track 1 camp took place in August, which is the middle of winter here! But the teenagers loved every moment of it and, although the team had little sleep, we also had a great time. During the camp we facilitate life skills sessions and run a VCT (voluntary HIV testing and counselling) programme using a team of qualified youth counsellors. The students attending the camp come from different backgrounds and cultures, but they all find a way to make friends.

We've recently been invited to help with life skills sessions looking at substance abuse. The sessions were held at a local church where there are 10 young people who've recently come off a destructive drug called TIK. The drug is readily available in local communities, and many young people become addicted. Our team takes part in these events during holidays when we aren't working in the high schools.

At Simanyene School, during October, the Peer Educators will plant three vegetable gardens as part of their school community involvement initiative.

October is also Stand Up Against Poverty month in South Africa. The students are excited to get involved with this project and I look forward to reporting on this for the next newsletter.

The Ukuthasa Peer Education Team is committed to transforming the community, and we can see real changes taking place. Our goal is to see teenagers making informed decisions about their lives – decisions that give them a brighter future to look forward.

FOCUS ON FUNDRAISING

The British 10k London Run

Congratulations to our amazing team of five runners: Jane Horner, Lyndsey Denton, Rachel Denton, Martin Ryan and Karen Yewman, who between them raised over £1,500... Thank you!

We have guaranteed places available for the 2010 race on Sunday 11 July and would love to hear from anyone who'd like to take part.

2009 Adidas Women's 5K Challenge

Well done and thank you to Jackie Roberts who completed this event and raised over £200 for Ukuthasa.

World Aids Day: 1 December

Help us raise awareness of the HIV/Aids pandemic by purchasing a special bead pin (priced just £2), handmade by township-dweller Sam Makhasi.



Sam was injured several years ago, and making bead pins gives him an invaluable source of income. Your support will help secure Sam's future and make a contribution towards our valuable work in HIV/Aids training and education.

Available from Sue Whittaker (details below).



Please consider helping raise funds for us through JumbleAID.com. JumbleAID lets individuals and businesses post unwanted stuff online and anyone can pledge a donation for an item. It's FREE, easy to use and not a penny of the donation goes to JumbleAID!

Alternatively, you can sell unwanted items on Ebay and donate a percentage to Ukuthasa.



Search the web with Everyclick.com and generate cash for Ukuthasa. It's as easy as a click of the mouse...
www.everyclick.com/ukuthasa



Easyfundraising is a shopping directory listing some of your favourite online stores including Argos, Next, Debenhams, John Lewis, Toys R Us, HMV and over 600 others. Just use the links on the Easyfundraising site whenever you shop online and, at no extra cost to you, we'll receive a free donation of up to 15% from every purchase you make.

It's FREE to register and you won't pay a penny more for your shopping when you use the Easyfundraising site. In fact you can even SAVE MONEY as many retailers offer discounts, special offers and 'e-vouchers' exclusive to Easyfundraising.

If you'd like to join, all you need to do is visit www.easyfundraising.org.uk and, when you register, select Ukuthasa as the organisation you wish to support... It really is that simple!



Ukuthasa has six gifts listed on this amazing website, which makes light work of shopping for gifts for friends, colleagues and family members. So don't spend time agonising over what to buy that special someone – simply take a look at the website www.livinggenerously.com



Help save the environment and raise money for Ukuthasa by recycling your old inkjet cartridges, mobile phones and laser/toner cartridges. £1 for all listed original inkjets, £30+ per mobile phone and up to £5 per laser/toner cartridge.

INFORMATION AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

If you'd like to learn more about the work of Ukuthasa, any of the projects or events mentioned in this newsletter or would like to get involved in any way, please visit our website, www.ukuthasa.org

Alternatively, contact our fundraiser and administrator, Sue Whittaker by telephone on 01689 852345 or email: sue@ukuthasa.org

