

# INDABA ZASEPHUMLANI

Volume 2 no 2  
December 2010

Dear Parents and Friends of Presbyterian Phumlani Educare Centre



In an article on closing the achievement gap between rich and poor, Mourshed and Whelan identify family circumstances as the most important factor. The second most important factor was quality pre-schooling. They quote a study where two groups of pre-schoolers from disadvantaged communities were tracked for thirty-five years. The group that had attended a high-quality pre-school were earning more, had better jobs and were less likely to have been in prison or divorced (*Newsweek*, August 23 2010). This article underscored the vitally important job we are doing: building children's lives from the bottom up, giving them a solid foundation physically, emotionally, cognitively, socially and spiritually, and thus maximizing their chance at a successful school career, and thereby escaping the cycle of poverty. Hopefully these children, when adult, will



be able to provide stimulating and stable homes for *their* children: thus the drop in the bucket of providing quality education at Phumlani will ripple outward to the next generation!

Even on the family front things have been happening. Apart from the school readiness workshop held in the beginning of the year, ten of our parents attended an early childhood stimulation course run by a volunteer at Masiphumelele



library, with one of our committee members, Siphokazi Katamzi, assisting her. The teachers noted a marked improvement in all ten children of the parents attending. The meaning of the word Masipumelele is "We shall succeed", and there is wonderful way in which people in this community work together to improve quality of life for all.

The English Programme and Brain Gym® tuition has continued from the first half of the year. Both are approached playfully and as an integral part of the lesson. The Brain Gym has improved classroom control and focus, as well as children's awareness of their bodies and how movement affects how they feel, learn and behave. It has positively influenced the Grade R class's ability to learn their letters and how to write them.

The children have been very keen to learn English this year, and the programme was implemented much better than last year. At the end of the third term the children presented a short show to their parents to show off the English they had learned, with songs and sketches of everyday situations at home and at school. It



was also an occasion to wear traditional outfits and to enjoy dancing! The Grade R girls visited the Fish Hoek Teddies, the youngest branch of the Girl Guides, during the fourth term: the little girls from different cultures shared in song and dance, and made African drums from two Styrofoam cups. It was fascinating to watch the eager attempts to communicate on both sides, and we hope to have many more of such meetings.

Although the children's knowledge of the language is still very basic, some of them were forming spontaneous, original sentences towards the end of the year. They were very simple sentences, for example "I love the water!" from an exuberant little boy enjoying the sea, but the fact that is occurred demonstrated a measure of internalization of English. Some of the parents are sending their children to English medium schools, so this can only be to their benefit.





In August we had a volunteer optometrist screen the children for vision problems. He worked under the auspices of Jonga Trust, an organization that screens and manages eye health in disadvantaged communities. Only one child needed glasses – I learned that the Xhosa people have a genetic disposition to good eyesight. The glasses were delivered free of charge two weeks later, but the little boy needing them needed lots of convincing to wear them! The eye and ear testing will happen annually from now on, providing yet another much-needed service to the children.



At long last we have a computer at Phumlani: an old machine which will be replaced by a new one in 2011, but a start. Rajin Naidoo has volunteered to help the Grade R children with basic computer skills, and has taught them how to control the mouse with a colouring-in programme. The children are very motivated and proud to be working on the computer, and next year we hope to expand this aspect of their education considerably. Having a computer on site also enables the staff and children to view the many photographs taken during outings, special events and daily school life, as well as exhibit them at parent events. Photographs are enjoyed by all!



Staff training has continued. Zoleka has attended a very intensive management course run by the department of Social Welfare, and the other teachers are all enrolled in early learning courses. Three of the teachers attended First Aid courses. Apart from the formal training, a lot of informal training happens by means of questioning and brainstorming after lessons: the teachers find this practical in-house training very valuable. All of them have improved considerably with regards teaching skills.



Outings, as always, are an important part of the curriculum. Many of the children hardly ever venture out of Masiphumelele, and if they do, it is to the shops. As a result their world view is very limited, and it is an exciting part of our job to open up the world to them! These outings are looked forward to eagerly and talked about long after they have happened. I sometimes wish I could get a peek into their brains and watch the neural activity that takes place during an outing! We visited Fish Hoek Fire Station, Silvermine Nature Reserve, Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens and Fish Hoek Beach during these two terms.



As Masiphumelele is a high fire risk area, it is important that the children are well educated with regards fire safety. The Fish Hoek firefighters are getting better and better at their presentations, which were given by a Xhosa-speaking firefighter for the first time this year. The children get a chance to show how they stop, drop and roll, crawl through a smoke-filled room, get to know the firefighters with all their gear on and even get a chance to sit in the fire engine and hold a hose. One of the firefighters told me that the number of fires in Masiphumelele has reduced greatly over the last year or so, and the only thing they can ascribe it to is the fact that the children are becoming educated in fire safety, and are probably teaching their parents.



The Silvermine outing fell on a beautiful, still winter's day. The children were fascinated by the reflection of the mountains in the dam- most of them had never seen something like this before and wondered why the mountain was in the water. A cormorant entertained the children by diving for fish and accompanying them as they walked round the dam. They were entranced by the ripples the bird was making, spreading wider and wider over the still water. Walking on the dam wall was an opportunity to experience height and depth, which is a rare

experience among the shacks of an informal settlement area. The Grade R class hiked up to a ridge that gave them a view towards Table Mountain and the urban sprawl at its feet, as well as southwards towards Cape Point. It also gave them an opportunity to walk through the fynbos and become aware of its beauty.



We visited Kirstenbosch on a glorious spring day, with the garden ablaze with colour. What joy it is to give the children a wide green expanse to run or roll down, to closely examine flowers from bud to seed, to play "boats" with leaves in a stream, to explore the texture and shape of the many statues with eyes and hands, to chase the guinea fowls and discover so many sights and smells! The best of it all is still the traditional hut: Zoleka demonstrated how the indigenous grains were ground to flour, and the children sang and danced and were quite the tourist attraction.



The beach outing had to be postponed because of rain. The following week it was windy, but none of the children took any notice – they happily played in the sand and sea, licked their ice creams and had a glorious morning of freedom and fun. When they were dressed in their swimming costumes or underwear, it became obvious that *none* of the children still sported the swollen abdomens that speak of malnutrition, which is a major breakthrough. This is also reflected in an improvement in the children's general health, as well as in their ability to learn and concentrate. A very big THANK YOU to all who generously donate food and transport it to Phumlani.



Our Nativity Play is becoming a tradition in Masiphumelele: only a few years ago only a handful of people attended, but now the hall was packed. The young

children are a clear and moving witness to the Christmas miracle as they present it mainly in English, but with some Xhosa songs. This year they presented it in Fish Hoek at St Kieran's Presbyterian Church for the first time. They had only practiced once in the church, but performed with such zest, clarity and confidence that they touched all our lives. Many of the congregation commented afterwards how they were blessed by the play, and that they were amazed at the clarity and command of English, as well as the confidence and joy which was so evident in the children.

At the end of it all we have the Graduation Ceremony for the Grade Rs. Beautifully dressed they go their paces before being capped to the loud cheers of the proud parents. They normally receive a gift of school stationery at this occasion, but this year each child also received a Xhosa first children's Bible. For many this is probably the first book own, and we pray that as they learn to read, it may become more and more precious to them.



What would the year end be without a visit from Father Christmas? The joy with which the children unwrap and discover their gifts is one of the best moments of the year. Luckily we were able to give lots of balls this year, as the popularity of soccer has not faded after the World Cup. The new doll-mamas were sitting in a circle comparing their babies, and one little girl found a chair and a blanket and sat quietly among all the noise, just loving her teddy bear. There are so many Wow!-moments at Phumlani!

It is all summed up in an experience I had a few months ago. I was out shopping when I suddenly felt a tug at my sleeve, and a beautiful little girl smiled up at me. She had been at Phumlani a few years ago. Her mother was with her, and she could not stop thanking me for Phumlani. "My daughter is doing so well at school. She can read. She can write. She is doing maths. And it is all because of Phumlani. Thank you, thank you, thank you."



Those effusive thanks were not just due to me, but so many people that make the school work. First and foremost thanks go to the hardworking staff: their love and dedication to the children is so great, and to that they are adding new teaching skills day by day. The committee works hard to keep the school running as best as they can, and Robyn Bath sees to the administration. Last, but not least, are all the generous people who donate to our school: without you we would not be there! Your gifts make miracles happen: perhaps they may seem like only small miracles, but the ripples are spreading wider and wider.

*Eva van Belle*



## CHAIRMAN'S COMMENT

Dear friends of our Presbyterian Phumlani Educare Centre,

It is a privilege to watch the great and sacrificial work done by so many at Phumlani. I wish to express my appreciation to Zoleka Magobozi and her staff. Our volunteers are many but I must single out Eva van Belle for the tireless enthusiasm, love, creativity and wisdom she gives to the staff and children. It has also been a joy (and a release for me personally) to have Robyn Bath as our administrator.

I have attached a summary of our objectives set for 2010. We were greatly surprised to stop and realize that almost all we set ourselves to do has been done. The one thing we have not yet achieved is to receive the government subsidy. Of course we would like to blame the bureaucratic pile of papers required for such a subsidy to be obtained!

For the long term viability of the Centre, it is essential to receive such a subsidy. Parents battle to pay fees and so we have relied on God's supply through the wonderful donations of our many supporters. These include our brothers and sisters in the Presbyterian Church in the USA, at Fort Walton Beach, and other individuals including those from the United States, United Kingdom and Holland. We would be in a fix without their generosity. We will be losing the major Community Chest donation in the New Year, owing to their limited distributable income received in 2010. We run a very tight budget, curtailing spending as much as we can.

In all we trust our Lord Jesus for everything. As He has blessed us in this year, we give to Him all the glory, honour and praise.

*David van Duyker (Rev)*  
Chairman

### PRESBYTERIAN PHUMLANI EDUCARE CENTRE

### PLANNING FEBRUARY 2010: OBJECTIVES 2010

#### 1) Staff

- To employ full complement of 5 staff.
- To improve salaries.
- To enable training.
- To upgrade contracts.
- To establish the work of the administrator.
- To encourage the work of our occupational therapist.

#### 2) Education

- To improve the English programme.
- To ensure Woza kuJesus Bible Education programme implemented well.
- To hold outings.
- To introduce computer training for the children.
- To further education by use of DVD's.
- To purchase new resources.

#### 3) Parents

- To encourage parent contact and support.
- To hold a training workshop for parents.

#### 4) Children with special needs

- To improve our care for the children with special needs by identifying needs and referring as required e.g. vision, hearing, learning, problems.

#### 5) Administration and office excellence

- To introduce office computer and Photostat machine.
- To consider new kind of bank account.

#### 7) Building and Equipment

- To maintain and enhance building and equipment.

#### 6) Government contact

- To get contact with SARS right.
- To seek Education and Social Welfare grants.