

June/July 2009

South Africa

evoke

movement created • change inspired

Are you
consciously
conscious?

From scrap to
soup kitchen!

BASA gets
a helping
hand

Join the Jozi Youth
Conference

Evolve Jun/Jul Edition 2009
RSA R19.95 (Vat incl.)
Other R17.50 (Vat incl.)



From scrap to soup kitchen table: Itshepeng and Caxton feeding scheme's brave new initiative

Itshepeng Recruitment has been a vocal proponent of social change in the community it has served for the last few years. The organisation's core business of finding employment for the masses of jobless in the communities of Coronationville, Westbury, Riverlea, Bosmont and Noordgesig is in itself an exercise in social entrepreneurship. Never one to rest on her laurels Itshepeng founder Iris Adams has always had her hand on the pulse of the community and continually strives to find newer and more ingenious ways of helping the community she serves.

She has started a beading project to retrain men and women who are having difficulty in the job market because of their age and staffed the organisation's soup kitchen with women who benefit directly from the project they are working on. Her next challenge has been to move the feeding scheme from reliant on donations and fundraising initiatives to eventual part sustainability. The scheme currently operates five days a week and is staffed by unemployed women from the very community it services. "My dream was to start a garden on the roof of the Coronationville Recreation Centre where our offices are. I've started with six container gardens that have already seeded," says Adams. True to form she researched the topic exhaustively in order to know which vegetables to grow and at which time of year they thrived.

She also concentrated on the types of produce that would best benefit the soup kitchen. She is currently growing carrots, spinach, cabbage, chives, parsley, dahlia and potatoes, but those are just the winter vegetables she stresses. "The aim is to

eventually provide most of the produce for the feeding scheme and sell the remainder to the community at a reasonable price. In this way we will be able to produce an income to sustain the scheme no matter what," she says. Despite the initial success of the project she knows that a certain portion of the feeding scheme's daily running will always be reliant on funding. "In that way we are extremely blessed to have partnered with Caxton who have been outstanding supporters of what we are trying to do," says Adams. On its own a soup kitchen in the township is not particularly unique neither is a community garden.

**Inevitably that's
what happens when
two passions
collide, it changes
the world!**

What sets this project apart is Adams' commitment to upliftment during every step of the process. So much so that when it came time to start the garden she opted for an unconventional but unique beginning.

"Patrick introduced me to a man who was turning used barrels into braais and containers for gardening," she says. Thys Neveling lives in the suburb of Brixton/Vrededorp, a community commonly known as Fietas. It was once a vibrant and cosmopolitan place but has in recent years gone the way of many communities afflicted by rising unemployment, crime, drug abuse and dwindling resources. He used to be a successful boiler maker, a trade that is

listed as one of the most sought after skills in the world, but one wouldn't know it to look at the conditions he is forced to live in. If abject poverty had a face this would be it. In a country like ours poverty is no stranger to any of us.

We are bombarded by images of informal settlements and homelessness but the missing part of the puzzle are people like Thys and his wife who are what can only be described as 'the working poor.'

Their home shows obvious signs of decay, doors hang off hinges and broken windows, that there is simply no money to repair, outnumber the home's occupants. "I've been doing this work for nearly eleven years now and it's been a struggle all the way. I was beginning to question things when Patrick came and offered to help me get the business running properly," says Neveling. "Patrick helped me and introduced me to Iris and since then I have just felt a shift, like things are finally beginning to go my way," he says.

Creating his containers is not as simple a task as it would seem and Thys was once temporarily blinded when things went horribly wrong while he was cutting a drum in half. "It contained a highly flammable material that is used to bind with glass. I was cutting through the drum and when I turned it upside down the opening closed, causing the smoke inside to build up and it exploded in my face. It was terrible, my eyes were open but I couldn't see a thing," he says. Although he has been careful since that incident and nothing close to it has happened again, he remains acutely aware of the dangers. Added to that is the

always present knowledge that they will starve if he is unable to provide an income. "For the most part it's safe and I can take precautions," he says.

He begins his day by scouting for drums that can be used for his work. He manages to find the steel drums at a reasonable rate at places around the city and has had to walk kilometers to get them. "I first saw him walking from one of the places with one drum on his head and pushing the other with his feet," says friend and business partner Patrick. It isn't unusual for Neveling to walk for an hour to places like Amalgam to get the vital component of his business. Often he'll even go as far as Booysens in search of drums, a two and a half hour trip on foot.

Patrick was inspired to help Neveling after witnessing the hard work he put in and finding out how people would take advantage of his situation. "I decided I needed to help him, he does good work and pro-

vides a quality product but you would find people coming to buy from him and then short changing him. Knowing that he was desperate and would take anything for his product," says Patrick.

Beside the container gardens that brought him to Iris' notice, his main trade is the braai's that he says are of a better quality than any found in shops and garages around the country. "My braais are cheaper and last longer because I reinforce them, I take pride in what I do because the worst thing for me is to have someone come back and say they weren't happy with my work," says Neveling. He also makes burglar proofing, roller gates, safety gates, awnings, "Anything to do with steel," he says. He sells his braais and container gardens for R400 for a large container and R180 for the small one.

He demonstrates the work involved in creating the containers from cutting the drums in half to cleaning them and welding

the structure together. He secures it by tying it to his makeshift workbench with tools that were not of the quality befitting the love and pride he clearly takes in his work. His passion for what he does is clear in spite of the challenges he faces. The final stage of his work involved cleaning and eventually painting the drums. From here he says goodbye and their journey begins. He doesn't know where they end up after he's sold them because he considers customers coming back, for anything other than more of his containers, a sign that he hasn't done his work well enough.

Adams is so happy with his product that she intends filling the roof of her building with his containers. Inevitably that's what happens when two passions collide, it changes the world. To purchase a container garden, a braai or to assist Thys and Patrick's business in anyway contact Patrick on 072 568 3515. [e](#)

Author: Mark Scheepers



African Divas has paid for an additional 20 containers (drums).

If you are interested in donating to this project (seed and potting soil is also needed) please contact Iris Adams on 011 477 0851 or email iadams@live.co.za.

itsadiva

women of today

Devoted dynamo guides children through their healing processes - Annie Masiba

Name: Annie Masiba

Occupation: Child and Youth Care Worker plus Life Skills Programme Manager at Kids Haven

Annie Masiba is a child and youth Care Worker, as well as, the Life Skills Programme manager at Kids Haven. Kids Haven is a Benoni-based residential shelter for abused and abandoned children who have spent some time living on the streets.

Annie has developed the Life Skills Group Therapy programme at Kids Haven. This programme assesses the needs of the children by evaluating their conflict management skills and individual circumstances and then drawing up a life skills programme tailored to each child.

In 2008, Annie was the Gauteng finalist in the Soul Sista Awards for exceptional women doing great things for their community.

Evoke magazine spoke to Annie about her role at Kids Haven.

What does a typical working day entail?

I begin my day by preparing for the various life skills sessions where I evaluate recurring and independent issues with my colleagues affecting the life skills programme at Kids Haven. I meet with the children on an on-going basis for counselling and I work on specific cases referred by childcare workers. A large portion of my day is spent liaising with relevant organisations, parents and relatives. Finally, I spend time keeping up-to-date with issues pertinent to the youth of today, reading teenage magazines and listening to their music so that our programmes stay relevant.



What would you call a really good day?

A good day is holding a group session where all the children participate. I love hearing a child say that they feel better. I love being a part of their 'wow' moments as it gives me a feeling of happiness and satisfaction and makes me feel as if I have fulfilled my purpose.

What are you trying to achieve at Kids Haven?

Kids Haven is continually trying to create a safe place for all children, to be children. We aim to facilitate holistically the development of the child, allowing them to get in touch with their emotions and experiences. This ensures the rehabilitation and growth of the children into adulthood so they can reach their full potential in the face of life's challenges.

What is your greatest challenge?

My greatest hurdle is that I am dealing with

children who are pessimistic and cynical with what life has in store for them. The challenge is to bring back hope to children who have spent time on the streets and to help them believe in themselves. Often, no one has ever believed in them so it is difficult to make them believe what I am saying. Unfortunately, the child has often been a victim of abuse and so the aim is to deal with the associated guilt.

What has contributed to your success?

My faith plays a large role in my dedication and passion. I would not be able to do my work with my own strength and wisdom. I measure my success through the growth of the children. To see them grow and overcome adversity assures me that my approach is correct and helps me continue. **e**

Author: Candice Langford



About Kids Haven

Kids Haven is a residential shelter for abused and abandoned children who have spent some time living on the streets. All of the children receive three daily meals, medical attention and clothing. Kids Haven covers the costs of sending most of the children to local schools.

Alternatively, the children receive classes at the Bridging School at the Multi Purpose Centre. The drop in programme caters for children who are not committed to rehabilitation, providing them with two meals a day and adequate clothing. They attend the bridging school and may participate in the skills programme, but do not sleep at the shelter. Extensive counselling is done with families and schools.

In addition to caring for the needs of the children, food parcels are sent home with children who go on home visits, and to other smaller organisations in need. Parenting courses and the family reunification programme, as well as various skills training courses that benefit the children as well as members of the community have been implemented. Indigent adults may come to the shelter where they receive food, clothing and a daily shower.

Issued on behalf of: Kids Haven
Issued by: Grapevine Communications

a day in the life...

community living

A man and his horse - the last of the community based family businesses.

One of the enduring images that make this country so remarkably different from any other in the world is the sight of horse drawn wagons at any given time on our streets. Very few of us can claim to have lived here for any significant amount of time without having crossed paths with them. Whether you've come to a stop, were behind them at a traffic light or glimpsed them on a country road while on holiday, we have all witnessed them at work. In the townships they are almost common place, so much so that only household pets even pay attention to their comings and goings any more. The only reminder of their uniqueness is when visitors to the area, unfamiliar with them, stare; fascinated by the spectacle they create as they move through the streets of the community with a chorus of barking dogs and little children's excited screams in their wake.



Charles Jacobs is one of these men and before embarking on this path he used to have a traditional nine to five job working for Be-Tabs Pharmaceutical Company. That was eight years ago but these days you're more likely to see him spending his days at the helm of a horse drawn wagon. It may not be an obvious career choice for most but for him it was the most natural transition in the world. Jacobs grew up in the community of Westbury in the west of Johannesburg. "My family has always had horses. We've worked with them for as long as I can remember. From childhood we were taught how to treat and care for them because they are our livelihood," says Jacobs. Charles is one of three brothers currently earning a living with his family's horses. His mother Ivy Jacobs owns the horses that he uses for his work. "I own a few horses that my sons use for their work and my brother also owns a few that his family works with," she says of the family's business. The men work independently of each other and there is never any conflict over work or where any one of them is allowed to operate.

Charles shares a house in Westbury with his wife, son, his brothers and their families as well as his mother. Although Charles has only been working full time with the animals for the last few years, his mother has always relied on them to keep food on her family's table. She, like her sons, grew up with these animals as her family's primary source of income. Her parents and grandparents as far back as she can remember have worked with these gentle beasts. They believe strongly in not mistreating the animals not just because sick and injured animals are useless but because in the years that they have co-existed with them these animals have become part of their family and are therefore afforded the same respect and treatment they would give to another person. "If you treat them well and care for them these animals can live almost 20 years but if they are treated badly and overburdened that time is almost halved," says Charles Jacobs.

They make their money by removing rubble and trash for people. They also clean yards and then remove the garden refuse as part of the service. Although clearing away debris and rubble forms the bulk of the work these men are not content to rest on their laurels when work slows down. They are often to be found in and around the community with discarded household appliances and scrap metal on their wagons. These trips take them to the neighbouring communities of Triomf, Sophiatown, Coronationville, Westdene, Auckland Park, Melville and Crosby in search of anything that can be sold or recycled in an effort to earn extra money. An average day sees them earning at least a R100-R250 depending on what they are asked to do. In the case of selling scrap metal, the going rate is R1300.00 a ton, but because the animals cannot possibly carry that kind of load they usually only earn about R500 this way.





Although this kind of money making opportunity remains relatively rare which means that they mostly rely on rubbish removal for their daily bread.

An average day for them begins early in the morning when the animals are fed, given water and brushed down. It is a very unpredictable business given that the first thing that determines whether or not they will work that day is the weather. "We don't take the animals out when it's raining or if the weathers bad, it's not good for them," says Jacobs. Once it's decided what will happen for the day the men usually wait until after the morning rush hour traffic to get on the road. They have over the years found many road users who become problematic even aggressive when they encounter the men on the road. "We have had people swear at us because they felt we were taking to long or interfering with traffic when we are on the road. So we try and avoid being out in the morning and afternoon rush hour traffic although it's not always possible," he says. The last statement is made with a touch of sadness at the impatience of their fellow road users who fail to understand that, like them, these men are only trying to feed their families. On their 'off' days or after a hard day's work the animals can often be seen in a large field opposite the Jacobs' home where they are left to graze contentedly

in the shade of 100 year old trees. They have to travel to De Deur in Randfontein to purchase new animals and it's not any horse that is capable of performing this kind of work. "They have to be at least 15-16 hands up because the type of work that we use them for needs bigger horses," says Jacobs. Because the horses are their livelihood a lot of time is spent on their care and maintenance.

There are regular visits from the SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) to make sure that the animals are cared for and properly treated. They also make sure that the animals are checked for symptoms of African Horse Sickness and that they are regularly de-wormed. The cost of caring for and maintaining the animals is astronomical. "We have to use a lot of what we make just on basic supplies for the horses like food and their shoes and the nails that need to be replaced each week. We see to their needs before our own," he says. Although he loves what he does he still nurtures the dream of one day owning his own bakkie. "I love the work I'm doing and working with the animals but I would like to expand my business to include removals with a bakkie. It would allow a lot more freedom in terms of the kind of work we can do," he says. For now though he is perfectly content to eke out a living for himself and his family using the horses even though it has its darker side in the community where they live. Westbury and the surrounding townships are well known for being communities in crisis, plagued by problems with crime, unemployment, drugs, violence and gangsterism. Growing up here, let alone operating a business like theirs in this community has not been easy for them. They have often found themselves on the receiving end of ill will but they persevere because this is their way of life and it affords them a respectable living, as it has done for all those that came before them. e

Author: Mark Scheepers



making a difference

one at a time

Mamelani Projects wellness programme and cooking demo's well received by communities.

Mamelani Projects, a Cape Town-based public health NGO, has reached over 3000 women across the Western Cape over the past three years through their Wellness Programme. The Workshop component of the programme aims to share basic health information and demonstrate the benefits of healthy eating and in this way empower women to take better care of their own health and the health and wellness of their families.

Wellness Workshops are currently underway in communities across the Western Cape offering free accessible health information tailored to meet the real needs of low income families. Workshops, which are predominantly attended by women from HIV and TB support groups, home based care groups and church groups are taught in either isiXhosa or English. The number of people in each workshop group is kept to a maximum of 15 people to create a safe environment where personal and sensitive information can be shared. Although smaller groups are preferred, at times groups of as large as 50 women attend the workshops. It is estimated that a total of between 60-120 people attend these workshops each week.

"The material that is covered in the workshops reflects the reality of where the audience is from and what foods they can afford," says Carly Tanur Founder and Director of Mamelani Projects. "The workshops provide a clear and concise explanation of how different illnesses affect the body and how the immune system works" says Carly. Workshops look at various low cost ways of strengthening the body and maintaining good health, including the correct use of prescribed medications, use of home remedies and the medicinal and nutritional value of certain foods and herbs. The wellness workshops cover topics which include:

introduction to wellness; steps to wellness; understanding nutrition and immune strengthening foods; cleaning your stomach and maintaining a healthy weight; accessing and adhering to treatment; healthy eating and healthy lifestyle; home remedies for minor illnesses; final evaluation and cases studies; and practical cooking demonstrations.

Mamelani has published a recipe book with a focus on low cost nutritious vegetarian meals called 'Imifuno for All!' "Cooking demonstrations bring these recipes to life. They are always enjoyable and participants have fun while learning important health lessons and tips," says Carly. The recipe book covers topics such as understanding basic nutrition, cooking methods that maximise nutrition and minimise waste, steps to wellness, filtering water, sprouting beans and basic hygiene. "The recipes are all vegetarian with a focus on combining foods for nutritional balance. The recipes are cost effective, nutritious and delicious" says Carly. There are over 50 recipes covering the different food groups and different cooking methods. The book is available to the public and all income generated from book sales will go towards the community-based

cooking demonstrations. By purchasing this book, you create opportunities for others to learn more about cooking for a better health. For more information on Mamelani or to find out where to purchase the book please visit www.mamelani.org.za

Various support groups, teachers and community groups have benefited from attending cooking demonstrations, which have equipped them with the necessary skills and information to cook healthy and nutritious food for their families. In the last few months Mamelani Projects has shared this information with support group members from Zancebo and Nokuthembeka; caregivers from children's homes in partnership with CHOSA (Children of South Africa); and with teachers from Zerilda Park Primary, in partnership with Earthchild Project. e

*Issued on behalf of: Mamelani Projects,
Carly Tanur, www.mamelani.org.za
Issued by: Magna Carta*

**Contact: Michelle Burt
Magna Carta (Pty) Ltd
T: 021 417 5930 • F: 021 425 6675
Level 1, The Foundry, Cardiff Street,
Greenpoint, Cape Town, 8001**



Photograph: Tyme Photography

*Caxton Itshepeng
feeding scheme*

ROOL

making a difference

one at a time

Star Schools

They have been around for more than forty years and still not enough people are aware of them.

Star Schools as a concept is simply brilliant.

They provide a learning environment to those who choose to use a more inclusive method of learning. According to Atul Patel, CEO of Star Schools, traditional distance learning and e-learning approaches have meant that learners were dependent on institutions providing content without the learner being able to interact effectively with someone. Learners are traditionally exposed to technology based learning at tertiary level. "This approach is problematic" says Atul Patel. He studied Electrical Engineering. His background as a technology officer at Unisa and Technikon RSA opened his eyes to the benefits and possibilities of using technology more effectively in the learning arena.

Star Schools has a network of approximately 100 educators on their books, helping meet the huge demand for world class education.

Atul says "I don't like to use the term e-learning because it implies separation of teacher and learner as in the distance learning method". He much more prefers a term he coins "open learning" and "blended approach". These terms suggest using all methodologies available to make the learning experience all inclusive. Atul says that the foundation of content provision is important and that is why they make use of all the resources available in the technological arena. "IT has been my passion and hobby" Atul informs me. Because he had an interest in education, and had seen a gap in the educational environment, Atul developed My Star using his engineering background and experience. My Star is an on line digital solution to the teaching and learning experience that provides fulltime support to the learner.

Star Schools has a network of approximately 100 educators on their books, helping meet the huge demand for world class education. They have what they call a learner incubator program, where

Understandably, affordability is a huge hurdle.

learners are closely monitored, ensuring a 98% pass rate with a critical focus on Mathematics and Science. Accountancy, Life Skills and English 1st Additional Language are some of the other learning area content provided by Star Schools. "My Star" is the portal that Star Schools uses to disseminate their content using internet, compact disc, DVD and cell phone applications. Technology is seamlessly applied through this technology. Importantly, their institution is NCS compliant.

The corporate sponsors of Star Schools ensure that 4000 learners make it through the doors of this institution every year! With over 240 "schools", spread over the breath of South Africa, "Star Schools touches around 15,000 learners' lives. The schools are situated in nodal hubs (more often than not in the city centre) where information is imparted. This is called contact learning.

Understandably, affordability is a huge hurdle. To help meet this challenge, Star Schools works in tandem with sponsors through their incubator system." Government needs to look at the Star Schools model in terms of meeting the challenge to provide world class education" adds Atul. The institution developed My Star space which is an internet protocol that, via a chat room facility, provides content specific to learning areas. The software also includes an e-book with flip page technology. An improvement on this situation was frequently asked questions where learners had access to a list of questions with answers.

Star Schools has a resource centre where learners have access to assistance to all their online material as well as contact learning. The Department of Education will do well to take look at this model of teacher and learner interaction.

For more information:

Dumisani Zungu

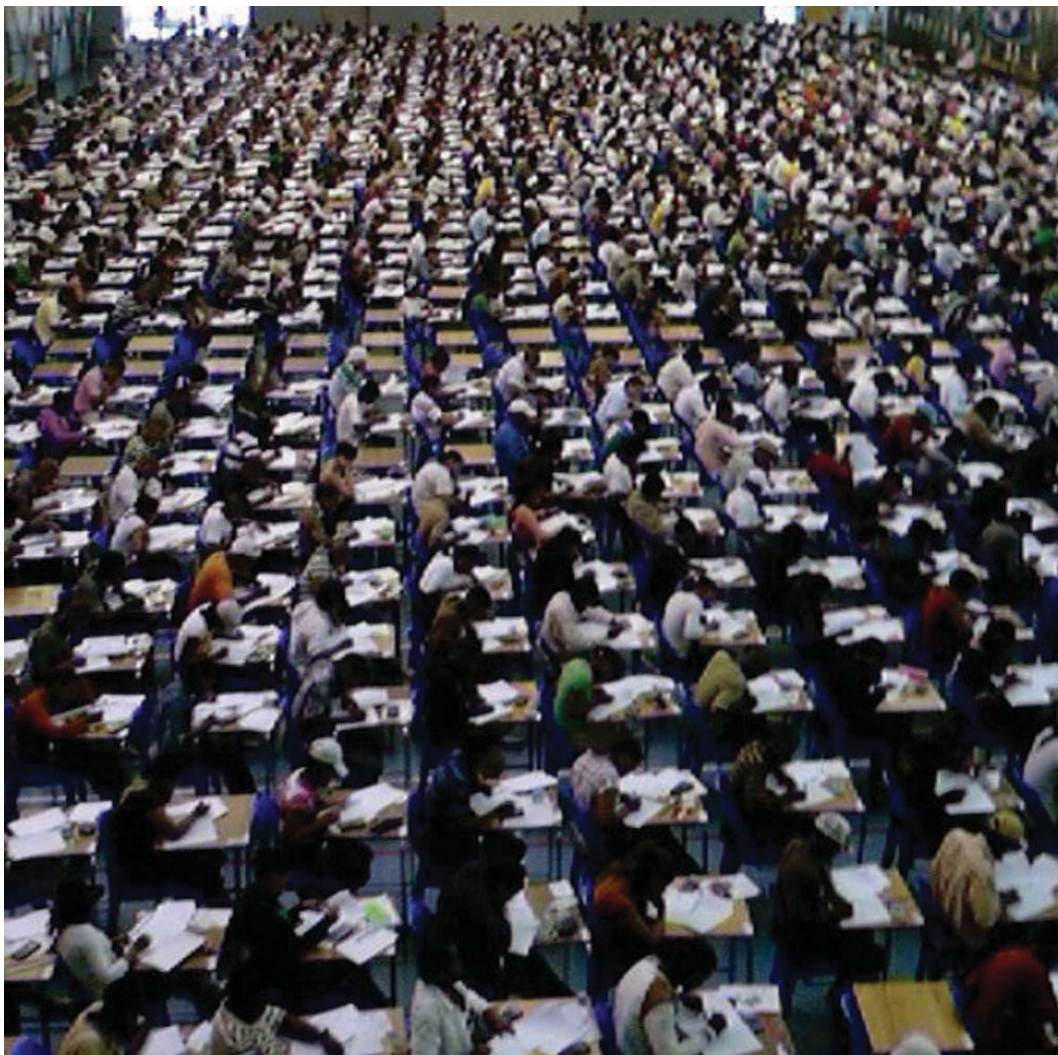
011 510 0080

dumisani@vumacom.co.za

www.vumacom.co.za



Students of Star Schools



The corporate sponsors of Star Schools ensure that 4000 learners make it through the doors of this institution every year! With over 240 “schools”, spread over the breath of South Africa, “Star Schools touches around 15,000 learners’ lives. The schools are situated in nodal hubs (more often than not in the city centre) where information is imparted. This is called contact learning.