



Friends of Udobo School Newsletter

No 25 August 2012



Photo: A future South African Olympian? Thabiso running at the school sports day.

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Roundup of a busy year at Udobo



Latest News:
September visit of Revd Ansie Liebenberg to the UK

From the Chair

Dear Friends,

Firstly may I thank you for your patience and apologise for my tardiness in not producing a Newsletter earlier than this. I also want to thank you for your continued support; as you know we have now completed the transfer of our support funding from 'UK Friends of Udobo' to 'Action Udobo' and thank you again for those of you who have transferred your regular financial giving from the old account to the new, your gifts are really treasured by the staff and pupils at the Udobo School. You will be able to read about how your gifts have encouraged the work of the school through the Newsletter sent to us by Anne Snyders, the Principal of the School, and included in our Newsletter over the next few pages.

Secondly, the Trustees are delighted to advise you that Rev. Ansie Liebenberg, the joint minister at Montclair Methodist Church, will be visiting the UK for 12 days from the

6th –17th September. Ansie will firstly be visiting her son in Essex, then staying with Patrick and Susan Hughes in Alrewas from the 8th until the 13th. Ansie will then be staying with Peter and Merle Cannell in Letchworth Garden City until she leaves the UK on the 17th. Ansie will be involved in worship in Alrewas on the 9th Sept. and in Letchworth on the 16th. Please contact Patrick on 01283 792248 or myself on 01462 637235 for further details of Ansie's engagements whilst she is in the UK.

Lastly, our next Newsletter will be with you before the end of November and will include a report on Ansie's visit, a financial statement of the Trust's business and our plans for the future.

With kindest regards,

David

David Latter

Chair of Trustees, Action Udobo

From the Secretary

Dear Friends

It has been some time since the last newsletter, so there is much news to share. In November of last year, I had the pleasure of spending a day at Udobo. On my arrival, I was warmly welcomed by Anne and after a brief chat we went in search of Ansie.

As we made our way around the school, the melodious lilt of little voices reached my ears. Around the next corner we came across the swimming pool, alive with squealing, squirming children, splashing about in the sparkling water. I would be fibbing, if I said I was not tempted to jump in and join them. Keeping a watchful eye and offering words of encouragement from the side was Ansie. After formal introductions had been made, Ansie handed over her watch and Anne, Ansie and I set off on a tour of the school.



Being yearend, small groups of children were scattered about the school grounds, some enjoying summer games and activities, others practising Christmas carols or rehearsing their lines for the annual nativity concert.

Our first stop was the kitchen, where I was introduced to Lumka and Cindy who have been running the kitchen since the sad loss of Liz, earlier in the year. They were eager to show me the new chest freezer, donated by the Lions Club and the school's weekly food requirements provided by 'Stop Hunger' and the 'Housewives Market,' amongst others.



In a room alongside the kitchen, the first group of 'little diners,' were tucking into their lunch. I was captivated by their smiley faces and impressed with their table manners.

On leaving the dining room, Ansie invited me to have a look at the playground at the front of the school. On closer inspection, I could see that it had been beautifully refurbished, complete with new bark chips, ready to be explored and enjoyed. Wandering from one area of the school to another, I was impressed by how well organised and maintained, each developmental areas was. I was also inspired by the happy and relaxed interaction between the children and staff. As we walked, Anne and Ansie talked about areas of success and outlined areas for development. They expressed hopes of securing a water drum, which since my visit has become a reality, due to the generosity of Action Udobo. Also on their wish list were solar panels and new

books and puzzles. They explained they were looking into ways of raising extra money to purchase more bark chips, replace the children's book bags, upgrade their 'Dinky City,' and buy toys, especially teddies, for the birthday box.

The art room was well stocked but closely monitored as paint and other art supplies are somewhat costly. I noted that the school had little or no PE equipment and was told that the development of PE was something they hoped to tackle in the New Year. I made a mental note to look out for good P.E schemes in the U.K.



The Computer suite consisted of three computers, with more being budgeted for in the new school year. Anne and Ansie said that they were also interested in purchasing new software. As the development of I.T skills is essential in this day and age, I promised I would make enquiries about programs suitable for pre-schoolers.

The adventure playground at the back of the school was impressive. Built over three levels, it offered the children endless opportunities to develop their co-ordination, build confidence and encourage

imaginative play. It was however, in need of refurbishment and at the time of my visit, Anne and Ansie were awaiting a quote for a plastic cased, eco-friendly climbing frame. They were hoping for a reasonable quote, as installing an eco-friendly system would be in line with maintaining the school's 'green' ethos.

We talked at length about the lengthy procedure involved in applying for government funding and Ansie told me that as an interim measure, Udobo was attempting to align itself with local schools with a view to sharing ideas and resources. It is encouraging to note, that during my visit, a representative from the Department of Health arrived to assess the school – a positive sign of progress, I am sure.

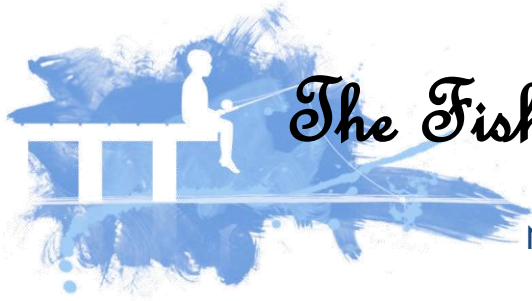
Anne and Ansie had great plans for fundraising in the year ahead. These included Popcorn, Juice and DVD mornings, a Trashion Show, Scooter Race, Sponsored Walk, Line Dancing, Christmas gift wrapping and an International Dinner. As Anne and Ansie elaborated on these, I too became enthused and raised the possibility of inviting local schools in the UK to mirror these fundraisers and to donate the proceeds to

Udobo. The suggestion was greeted with much enthusiasm.

Over a cup of tea, Ansie and Anne talked about how much the parents value their children's education and how they are trying to encourage them to be more pro-active in decisions regarding their children's learning. They were encouraged by the fact that almost all their past pupils were thriving in primary school and that a few of them had visited with their parents to show off their school reports. Reflecting on 2011, both Anne and Ansie agreed that it had been a year of ups and downs but that the challenges had been surpassed by the knowledge that the children were flourishing and were happy and confident and excited about coming to school. With such dedicated leadership, could it be any other way?

As I left Udobo that day, I felt tremendously blessed and took with me a heart filled with hope for the future of these precious little children. It is my hope and prayer that I in turn, left behind an assurance of the continued love and support of all their friends in the UK.

Jenny



The Fisherman's Tale

News from Udobo School

From the Principal's Desk

Greetings to all from Udobo Pre-Primary School.

The first term was incredibly hot but the teachers and staff coped very well on days when it was stifling! When the rain did come we were prepared, as thanks to the amazing support of our Udobo friends in the UK, we had been able to install a Jojo water tank. The water conserved, has been used to flush

our toilets. In a country, where water is especially precious and as a way to keep our school 'green,' this has been a wonderful gift which will continue to be a blessing to our school.

Also on the 'green' front, we have secured the services of one of our grandfathers, Mr Ndlovu, who is working very hard on our vegetable garden. Mr Ndlovu is a retired school principal and was very involved with art in his school so hopefully, he will share his talents with our little ones!



The new 'Jojo' water tank donated by Action Udobo

We started the year with a slightly smaller school as we have had to limit our intake to local children. Our feeder primary schools are oversubscribed and are only able to enrol children living within the catchment area. We presently have 89 children on roll and have a full bridging class, children who will spend at least two years with us.

This is really positive as it means they will receive a thorough grounding in language as well as the skills necessary for 'big school.' Our application for government funding together with our business plan has been submitted. Now the waiting begins!

An exciting new development comes in the form of the establishment of a partnership with a thriving local pre-school. The partnership will include teacher exchange, shared fundraising and the provision of learning materials for Udobo.

We have appointed a new Secretary/Bursar but have yet to appoint a new kitchen manager so are relying on volunteers to hold the fort until we can.

We now have a staff of 12, which includes 5 teachers, 2 assistants, a cook, a cleaner, a driver, secretary and principal. With the departure of our maintenance manager, our school maintenance has reverted to the MMC Trust who spend many hours upgrading and maintaining our school.

Our first fund-raiser of the year was a Valentine's draw with 3 hampers in the offing. It was held in conjunction with our parent orientation day. The children each iced two heart biscuits, one to eat

and one to take home. Much fun was had by all. We also had a games morning, at which fun and fellowship between parents, church members and the children was the order of the day. We closed the term with an extremely successful Trashion Show. Every year the parents get more innovative and the creations were just beautiful. We had a hat competition for the adults and one for the teachers. The teacher's hats were all exceptionally creative but ultimately Teacher Cindy's was judged best.

The second term got off to a good start with a full quota of students and the re-opening of our after school care service, as required by the department of education. We presently have 7 children using the service. We appointed our bus driver, Liz Plaatjies, to the position of office administrator. She is an excellent administrator and has been a great help to Anne, who has had to divide her time between school and caring for her husband, who was taken ill.

Our newly appointed cleaner, Zanele has brought much joy for she is really diligent and has the voice of an angel! Zanele's story is one of courage and determination. The sole bread winner for her family, she cares for 3 children and her elderly mother and still travels a long way

to and from work each day. She previously worked as a grade R teacher for one of the pre-schools in the area under very difficult circumstances, for when she could not find accommodation, she slept in the park, so determined was she, not to miss work.

We are most grateful to our local sponsors, who supply us weekly with ingredients, which guarantee our children a balanced diet.

This term has been an extremely busy one packed with visits, events and fundraisers.

A visit from members of the Society for the Visually Impaired, together with a guide dog, proved to be a valuable experience.

The children were particularly interested in the Braille books they had brought along to show them and happily donated £200 towards dog food for the guide dogs.

The children learnt a lot from the Warrant Officer who came to talk to them about 'stranger danger' and civic rules and responsibility.

Another highlight was a visit by the school photographer, who took individual and class photographs. Although this is no longer a fundraiser for the school, the parents value having an annual

keepsake of their child's school years.

In May, we took the school to the museum, followed by a picnic on the beach. The outing was a huge success and the children continue to draw and talk about their experiences.

Also, in May, the children invited their mothers and grannies to a mother's day assembly. We enjoyed chatting over tea and biscuits, followed by an assembly in the church. This gave the mothers and grannies an opportunity to see how we award our 'Star of the week' and 'Superkids' certificates and incentives and they were treated to a lovely story about a special mother, shared with them by Wendy Kirsten.

Not forgetting the dads, our school secretary took it upon herself to spoil our fathers with lovely homemade biscuits. The fathers joined us for an assembly in the church and after the usual presentations, our church's creative director, Wendy Kirsten, told a story about a father's love for his child, reminding us of our Father God's amazing, unconditional love for us. Each class then sang or recited for their dads and gave them a small gift.

In May we had a fun morning during which all our work centred around teddies. The children wore their pyjamas and brought teddies and blankets to school. After the morning meal, they watched cartoons and drank hot chocolate with marshmallows. This was followed by an assembly during which the teachers enacted 'Goldilocks and the three bears' – teachers Amos, Daria, Edinah and Roxanne have clearly missed their calling! The children thoroughly enjoyed their teachers acting. It was a great day and we look forward to future fundraisers, alternating between movies and fun mornings.

Our annual scooter race took place in June. The children had practiced hard and looked forward to this much loved event. We were encouraged by the good turn out of parents who cheered on their

children. The race was won by a very excited Blue Group. Following the scooter race, we moved onto the grass for the flat races, egg & spoon race, ball relay, sack race and tug of war. It was then the parents turn. They ran flat races and took part in an egg toss competition. The children were greatly entertained by seeing their parents liberally covered in egg. *(See photos on back cover.)*

School broke for the holidays at the end of June, at which time the half year reports were given out. Our school bus did its last trip, which was a nostalgic moment, as it has served us well over the years and has been a greatly appreciated gift from Friends of Udobo UK. Unfortunately we are no longer able to afford to run it and it will be sold with the blessing of our 'Friends of Udobo.'



Farewell to the School Bus, which will be sold to fund higher priority projects in the School.

Cute Quips

Hailey
(in teacher Roxanne's class):
'I thought I left my book at home - feel my heart go!'

Roxanne: 'Were you scared?'

Hailey:
'Very!'

Mariah (in teacher Mirriam's class)

Mirriam told her class that they would learn to speak Zulu in class 1, 'oh no', said Mariah, 'I don't want to turn brown!'

Mirriam then explained that even though she speaks English she has stayed brown!

Sanele
(in teacher Daria's class):
'what is a chair called in English?'

Alisha noticed that Roxanne had freckles on her arms and face. Rox explained about her fair skin and how she did not tan but just got more freckles from the sun. At first Alisha said she should wait in the shade until the freckles went away and then decided the wind would blow them away. 'Teacher, when the wind blows I will hold you up and you will see when I put you down the freckles will be gone.'

Scooter Day (and other sports)

see page 10

From top to bottom:
Dokata; Banele;
Yolanda in the
'wheelbarrow race';
the Tug of War

