

“Few will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events. It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strike out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.”

–Robert F Kennedy

UPDATE

The colourful photos on the cover of this newsletter are part of a magnificent gathering of people in the city of “Joyburg” as it is now being called. Sue Jameson is just the type of person described in the quote and she is busy with the transformation of the city...Her organisation, “Dynamic Living” is all about the transforming Power of Joy and Laughter. When she gave a Laughter Workshop at one of our Hands of Joy reunion last year, Graham and I were in awe.

And now Sue has taken it to the streets. After she won a competition for “Firsts”, Vodacom and Vodafone sent a professional film crew from the UK to film her first laughter mob.

Over 250 of us, including Dancers and Drama students from City Varsity College, a professional Brass Band and Tshepo Machitele’s “Kids with Rhythm” and their Djembe Drums, gathered at “The Sheds”, a new venue in downtown Johannesburg. After having faces painted and stocking up with gold hats, flags and balloons, we had a time of jubilant laughter and proceeded into the streets. All of the instruments were played with enthusiasm as we sang, “Oh, When the Saints Go Marching In...” And for more than 3 hours the streets were filled with Joy.

What a wonderful celebration and it’s only the beginning! A short film of the day and preceding week’s activities, will be released in the near future...

Who would have thought that a parade of this kind would happen in downtown Johannesburg???



“Tree of Life”
by Michelle lise van wijk

Early in May, one of the most profound and unexpected events of 2014, which has been called “The Year of the Family,” occurred when two South African women artists created an Art Exhibition in the Voortrekker Monument. This granite monument to commemorate the Voortrekkers, is not far from The Freedom Park where the “Road to

Reconciliation” connecting the two landmarks, was opened in 2012. At their own expense, the artists rented the venue and transported their massive paintings all the way from Cape Town...

I marvel at the courage and talent of these women to make such an impact on a place that was previously a bastion of the “Old Regime” in South Africa. Barriers are being broken down on many levels of South African society.

At the same time, a group of artist’s from the previous year’s Freedom Exhibition on Human Trafficking, were also invited to participate in a joint celebration of “Family” by exhibiting paintings on this theme in the Gallery of Leaders at Freedom Park. Once again, Artist and Curator of the Freedom Exhibition, Marisa De Lange, rose to the challenge. During the days of the joint exhibitions, people from all over the world visited and got a glimpse of the message of hope that poured out from these works...

And later in the year, we were asked to exhibit Art and Sculpture during an “International Restorative Child Justice Conference” that UNISA was hosting at Freedom Park. The organisers of the conference thanked us profusely for the exhibition as they found the works meaningful and uplifting.

A committed group of women have committed to meet on the 21st of each month, to pray for Freedom from Human Trafficking in synch with the International A-21 Campaign initiated by Christine Caine from Hillsong Church in Australia. The Campaign aims to “Abolish Injustice in the 21st Century.”

ACHIEVEMENTS

In the year of 2014, Hands of Joy has been very active and is directly involved in sponsoring or assisting the following students ...

1. Mthobisi Nkozi is being sponsored to attend SSB Independent High School in Grade 11 and receiving assistance for transport.
2. Zanele Mokgwathle is being sponsored fully to attend Pretoria University for Accounting and receiving assistance for transport.

3. Ashley Mashau is in 3rd year UNISA Correspondence University for Accounting and Business Economics Degree and is receiving funds for mentoring other students which he uses to purchase groceries.

4. Tommy Makhura continues in 2nd year Accounting at Wits University. Although Hands of Joy sponsored him through High School which gave him University entrance, he is privately sponsored and we are funding his text book and transport costs. Tommy is mentoring young children in his Cosmo City community in Maths.

5. Princess Machitele is miraculously working at Copperleaf Crèche in Johannesburg and needs to upgrade her skills because she was hired without any previous training. Her employer, who is extremely pleased with her performance, agreed to pay half of the costs for an excellent Part-time course in Child Care. Hands of Joy is sharing the cost of this, realising the huge benefit of Early Childhood Education.

6. "Kids with Rhythm" is a program developed by Tshepo Machitele. One Saturday a month, he works with local children in Diepsloot at his church, giving drumming workshops, teaching guitar and reading to the children.

Hands of Joy gives him a small amount to purchase food for the disadvantaged children to be nourished at the end of the session. Then another Saturday each month, Tshepo travels to a home for orphaned children, where he also gives drumming workshops and motivational talks. We pay for the transport of the Djembe drums, of which he now has over 20. He has visited a number of these homes and always gives us a report with photos.

7. Abel Mosweu is completing his **Master's Degree** in Landscape Architecture at Pretoria University, through my husband Graham's Company, who pay his tuition fees. We are giving him moral and prayer support! And he is giving us valuable wisdom and advice for our NPO Board.

8. Aubrey Mokgwoatle and Duke Machitele attended a Troubadours Discipleship Training Program at YWAM (Youth with a Mission) in the Cape Province this year. After the two month training program, they raised their own support for a plane ticket to Brazil where they went on a Mission Outreach Program

during the Soccer World Cup. Hands of Joy sponsored their course and art supplies, their transport to and from the course and assisted with other supplies they required. In addition, we assisted with funds for food and accommodation for the second month they were in Brazil. Attached to these funds, was a contract for hours of community service they were required to do both before they left and when they returned from this extensive and life changing trip.

9. Elverouscha Block, a bright, young and energetic student from the coloured Community in Mamelodi Township in Pretoria, is being partially sponsored for the 2nd year at the Deutsche Schule nearby. And it appears that her younger sister may also qualify for this program in the future.

10. We also offer moral, practical and spiritual support to many of the students who keep in contact through reunions and with each other. So many have no or very little family support or structure and they value our input.

11. Young Artist Nhlanhla Nhlapo from the Free State, is in his 3rd and final year of Fine Arts at Tshwane University of Technology and continues to thrive on very little. He is even selling his charcoal drawings to help with fees for materials. His teachers are pleased with his talent and dedication. They are encouraging him to apply for a government sponsored bursary next year, so he can increase his skills at a different University in Johannesburg and study teaching.

REUNION AND BOARD MEETING

"God has an individual and unique plan for each of us and comparison with others only tends to be a source of discouragement or pride... It is vital that you learn to accept and respect the person God made you to be." (J. Meyer)

At our recent reunion, many of the students shared their stories and I think this is an ideal way for each of them to find affirmation for their own unique journey, while being encouraged by the others. It also offers a time of interaction and instruction and gives the board members insight into the students' lives.

Our meeting opened with prayer and a reading from Psalm 25, highlighting some of the key verses. The

focus was that there is nothing about our lives that is hidden from God. He is interested in all aspects of our lives and invites us to ask Him for guidance. At this meeting, to celebrate Lou Ann and Jacqui's 60th Birthdays, we shared our own stories of Hands of Joy experiences and influences, as far back as Riversands.



Lou Ann and Jacqui

Lou Ann related an amusing story about teaching some young students entrepreneurial skills, involving a small business opportunity they called, "Oranges from Heaven."



Zephaniah Bongani Shabangu shared his long journey from the days of Riversands to the present. Zephaniah was one of the first students sponsored

to East Rand High School for the Arts by Hands of Joy. But we hadn't seen him for more than 10 years! Since that time, he has obtained I.T. Training from Boston College, through a sponsorship from a member of Ridgeway Church after he received his Matric. And he is caring for his 6 year old son named Theo. He is currently employed by an I.T. Company and attends a local church. Sometimes on weekends, he works at a local Christian Book Store called Cum Books. He related how Lou Ann was there for many of the firsts in his life from his first Bible, to accepting Christ, to his baptism. He is very grateful!



Ashley Aubrey and Zephaniah

For awhile, he worked for a company called Office National and made a good salary. Then he lost his job and was without work for two years. During this time, he also broke up with his girl friend, as she did not share his faith, but he never stopped praying. Zephaniah was delighted to attend our reunion and is hoping for more contact in the future! And so are we...He is a good friend to Jonas Malele and concerned for his Mom Christina, whose health is not good.

Abel Mosweu then described his amazing journey up to the present where he is working on his dissertation to complete his Masters in Landscape Architecture this year.

He has titled it INDAWO YAMI – A Catalyst for quality open space in a low cost housing community. This will be of benefit to the communities of Diepsloot, Cosmo City and many others in Southern Africa... He is living in Pretoria and has developed a strong friendship and respect for both Lou Ann and Graham Young – even house sitting for them when they are away. He has also been sponsored by and worked for NLA, appreciating opportunities for some exciting work and travel...In his own words; "It has been an awesome journey!"

Ashley Mashau continues to work on his Accounting Degree with UNISA and he enjoys teaching accounting to matriculants at a nearby High School, as well as a young woman who is attending Damelin College to study Accounting. There is another young man he mentored named Silas, who is requesting assistance from Hands of Joy to study for a Technical Degree in Accounting next year, since his father has passed away.

Tshepo Machitele related a story many years ago, around the time when he and Aubrey were attending Riversands in Grade 7. They were both chosen to go to England on a “Kids Care Project.” Tshepo’s Dad was strict and relied on him to look after his brother Duke, so at first he was not allowed to go. Their Mom left when Duke was only 2 years old...

Tshepo was so keen for this opportunity, he somehow managed to persuade his father to let him go along with Aubrey. Hands of Joy gave him R1,000 which he needed for pocket money while there. He was very careful and didn’t spend the money. Instead he brought it home and the family used it for groceries for a very long time.

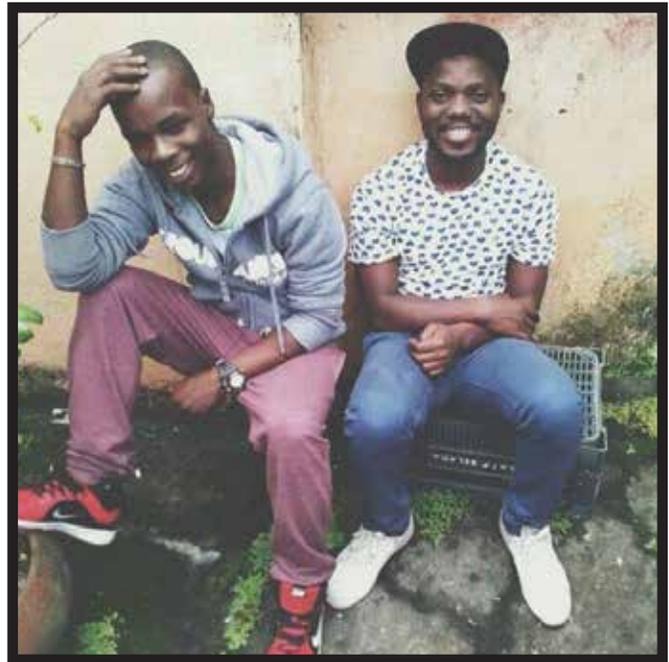
From a young age, Tshepo learned responsibility and survival skills.

Aubrey Mokghoatle also attended Riversands and went to the Church Camp at Stoney Ridge where he became a Christian. He loves drama and attended East Rand School for the Arts but it was very tough as he was not sponsored by Hands of Joy and sometimes didn’t have money for rent.

After he matriculated, Aubrey started an Arts Project doing plays and drama. He lives with his Granny as his parents are divorced and money was often an issue. Although Aubrey applied for University and was accepted, he didn’t get funding. He worked for awhile but quit his job as a shop assistant when he thought there was funding for him to study but again it didn’t go through. Then he couldn’t have his job back.

In a time of discouragement, he contacted Abel relating his desire to study Drama and Abel suggested that Hands of Joy may be able to assist. That’s when he learned about the Troubadours Discipleship Training School at YWAM. What an exciting journey he and Duke went on this year! Though at first he was a little disappointed – as YWAM was in the small town of Worcester in the Cape, rather than the exciting city of Cape Town. They had to attend classes and do intense self study, learning about forgiveness and the Father heart of God. They also practised dance and drama routines for the Outreach in Brazil during the Soccer World Cup.

His life has been forever changed by the experience...



The boys in Brazil

Duke Machitele was wandering around Diepsloot, homeless before he attended the DTS with Aubrey. Lou Ann thought of him as a loose canon...He is a very caring, energetic and talented young man but due to his background and life experiences, was very angry and even disillusioned!!!

This training experience was valuable for him - especially the lecture phase, where he too, learned about forgiveness, the Father heart of God and channelling his talents and abilities to the glory of God...

This was all very good preparation for the time in Brazil. Team members were young people from all over the world including Korea, US and Finland. During the training, they also had an outdoor camp where survival skills were taught to prepare them for the outreach. For a few days, they had only a small amount of food and water with them... Hands of Joy sponsored the boys for the Discipleship Training Course (DTS) but not the outreach. Several weeks before, only a few team members had the money for their ticket so it appeared as though they would only go on a local outreach but by a few days before the deadline, all of the team members somehow raised the money - except for Duke and Aubrey. Each of the boys needed R12,500 for their airplane ticket and only had a small amount.

In the evening, all of the students got together for prayer and while they were praying, God spoke to the other team members. When they raised their heads, the boys saw that other students wrote amounts on the board to the total of R12,500, under each of their names. They had sacrificed their own privileges to sponsor Duke and Aubrey!

The boys related how they were crying with joy for most of the following day...

Another amazing thing was that a travel agent held a block booking of 15 tickets at a specified reduced price for a few months, while the going price for a ticket to the World Cup Soccer in Brazil was now much higher!

When they arrived in Brazil, the team experienced a huge culture shock as there was a lot of sensuality and drugs. Many of the people were involved in forms of Catholicism... They stayed in a dangerous place where the police didn't even go!

And that is where they began to give performances, hand out Bibles and pray for the people. Churches began to call them for performances and many of the drug dealers and drug lords came. They also went to schools and shared the Gospel, often giving prophetic words to the students. While there, the boys realised what power and authority they have from God. They travelled a lot and were blessed with many material things. To quote Duke; "It was not a time of fun but fulfilling and meaningful." Both Duke and Aubrey applied to be team leaders on staff at the next Trobadours in 2015. They have been accepted for the training and staff position. I believe this will reinforce the valuable skills and life lessons they have learned. The hours of community service they were required to do, in exchange for aspects of their sponsorship are almost complete... And now, they will need to raise funds for their food, accommodation and travel back to the Cape. When the next Troubadours is over, they both hope to register for Media studies which is also given by YWAM in the Cape. Several years ago, Thandie's daughter Nomvula completed this training and is now a producer with One Gospel TV. We believe the training would give the boys valuable practical skills for the future!

After our formal meeting, performances were given by Tshepo Machitele on guitar. Then Duke and Aubrey danced to the beat of Tshepo's Djembe drum showing us one of the routines they performed when away.



Tshepo playing the guitar while daughter Lungile watches

Later in the day, several of us went to visit Jonas Malele, who was very ill and couldn't walk. He had been hospitalised for three weeks and took turns staying with his cousin and Zephaniah's family as he could not live alone. Presently Jonas was staying with his cousin Dora, who also attended Riversands when I was teaching there. She is under 30 and has 5 young children. It was shocking to see Jonas as he was so gaunt and weak, finding it an effort to speak. We had been in touch often but despite probing, he never told us what his illness was. He only said he didn't have enough water or blood in his body. Finally when his cousin told me he had TB, I understood. There is a real stigma to this as it is often related to HIV infection. Dora brought me the medication he was taking and I photographed it so I could discuss it with Dr Sonia. She had been willing to see him but since he couldn't walk, it was impossible. Three of us prayed vigorously for a long time taking his hands and asking God to heal him. Subsequent to this, Zephaniah has been to visit Jonas and confirmed that he is improving. When I spoke to him only a week later, Jonas' voice was stronger and he informed me that he was even able to walk short distances now. Dr. Sonia has advised some protein powder and vitamins to build up his strength. And two weeks later, Petrus Morobane, who was hospitalised with Tuberculosis 10 years ago during his final year of high school, went to visit and encourage Jonas. He described his condition as worse than Jonas... And his story is powerful! After prayer and medication, Petrus went on to complete High School and obtain a Degree in Business Administration with CIDA College. He is currently employed by a South African Bank as a Vehicle Financing Officer.

We continue to pray for Jonas to recover completely. And his newfound brother Gerson, keeps in close contact with him as well.

Aubrey told us at the reunion that sisters Lebo and Zanele were unable to attend because they had not come home but stayed near their respective Universities to study for the upcoming exams. Lebo is studying Journalism at Shoshanguve and Zanele is at Pretoria University and coping well with her work load. After completing High School at SSB on Sponsorship from Hands of Joy, Zanele's marks were high enough for her to receive acceptance to study Accounting at Pretoria University. Though Zanele was accepted at Tuks, she received no bursary or grant and had no place to stay. But she was determined to study. We posted a request for funding for Zanele as she is a good, reliable student and during the first week of school, Hands of Joy received R25,000 in one day. To her credit and Lou Ann's surprise, Zanele had registered already and was attending classes. Her Mom and Granny had both taken out loans to assist with registration. What faith and tenacity! We need a total of R30,600 for her studies next year. She has successfully completed her first 3 terms of University and passed well, commuting back and forth from Diepsloot and staying at a friend's when she has late classes. It is too dangerous for her to travel at night! We really hope to be able to sponsor Zanele again in 2015.

For Lebo, this year has been challenging as some of the students were striking due to lack of government funding for their programs. This interrupted classes as it became violent. Classes have resumed and will be extended to make up for lost time.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

We have a wonderful contact with a local Rotary Club in Pretoria who donated blankets for the winter. After learning about Hands of Joy, they arranged for us to receive 50 blankets. These are being distributed to the children in Diepsloot that attend Kids with Rhythm and to homeless people in Pretoria, through a very dedicated Health Care Worker with Pen Ministries named Nancy from Nigeria.



Children with blankets

Since Aubrey and Duke were required to do hours of Community Service Work, before and after their training, in exchange for aspects of their sponsorship, a wonderful partnership with an organisation named Afrika Tikkun has begun. Prior to this, Duke was employed with the organisation for a short time.

Afrika Tikkun, formed after the first democratic election in 1994. Its aim is to empower communities to develop new generations of productive citizens. Afrika Tikkun's is a sustainable future for children in South African townships.

Afrika Tikkun is dedicated to investing in education, health and social services for children, youth and their families through its community Centres of Excellence and strategic partnerships. As part of their main activities and services Afrika Tikkun runs Child and Youth Development Programmes (CYPD). These are Skills taught to enable children to access knowledge and learn through experiential education in libraries, computer labs, sports, drama and other structured recreational programmes. They also offer Nutrition, Food Security and Support Services through Community kitchens, vegetable gardens, weekend feeding, food parcels, emergency relief and lunch boxes.

Although the boys did menial jobs at Afrika Tikkun before they left for the course, when they returned, their new skills were implemented. They were requested to do dance workshops with the students after school in preparation for an end of the year performance which they were put in charge of organising. This is a wonderful challenge and opportunity for them.

They are also working with Tshepo who is actively presenting an after school program to the children 3 days a week and some Saturdays at their Church. Since the store he was working at for the past 4 years drastically cut back their staff, Tshepo has become unemployed.

It is Tshepo's dream and mine to see him working full time at Kids with Rhythm, presenting drumming and motivational workshops, writing and performing his own music. Already, he is making a tangible difference in his community giving joy, faith, hope and skills to young children. Aubrey and Duke are working with him whenever possible.



The kids with new shirts on

They have even approached SANCA to work with the people in the drug rehabilitation program. successful last year.

Tshepo is close to producing a recording and video which will help him to gain exposure for his talent. A few months ago, he prepared an application for Kids with Rhythm to become a Non Profit Organisation with my assistance. It has been submitted, however this process can take awhile, so at present, we are hoping to give him as much support and encouragement as possible. The good news is that, Save the Children's Fund, ABI Coca Cola Company and private individuals are all interested in the work that he is doing. He has been interviewed on the radio several times and always speaks well! Still, the bottom line is that he needs income to support his family...And he has perseverance, energy talent and integrity all mixed with faith. So we are very excited!

Gibson Morobane, who is on our board, continues to

work as a prison warden and study towards a degree in Health and Safety Management. He gives inspiration to the inmates he counsels and is currently working to draw attention to the facilities in the prison that have been neglected. There are workshops in the prison for welding and carpentry that have been closed down because they do not meet health and safety requirements and Gibson has become part of a committee to revitalise these facilities for rehabilitation of the prisoners.

Though I have shared so much good news in this newsletter, a recent development highlighted the desperation that many young people from the Diepsloot and Cosmo City settlements live with. A distraught Tshepo Phiri sent a message to say that he was heartbroken! Tshepo has recently become a proud father to Lesedi Louann Phiri and I was concerned that there was a problem with his relationship to Lizzy, who is the mother of his child and unemployed. But that was not the case. Tshepo has found the experience of having a family to be profoundly healing. He never knew his own father and his mother abandoned him when he was 11...Having a child of his own has given him a glimpse of the unconditional love that God has for us!

Since he was without family support, Hands of Joy has sponsored Tshepo's schooling through High School, providing shelter and food, as well as moral support and encouragement on a regular basis since that time. He is now in his mid 20's and works full time as a petrol attendant to provide for himself and his family. The reason he was so distraught, is that his cousin Reuben is in jail for house breaking and his friend Zama has committed suicide. Zama was Tshepo's best friend and in Tshepo's words; "they had plans together!" He was a musician, one of the best young rappers in Diepsloot which is a densely populated community of over 200,000. He had a small business which he ran from home but often became discouraged.



Diepsloot

This is the sad reality for many of the Disadvantaged Youth in South Africa and Hands of Joy is making a profound difference in their lives and families. What is most encouraging these days, is that the young people we have assisted are not only thriving but making a difference in their communities!

CONCLUSION

Throughout the world, this has been a difficult year with many tragic occurrences of terrorism. And in these times, we need to evaluate our own lives, giving weight to what really matters.



In this, the Year of the Family, I want to acknowledge my own families – the Witt's and the Young's, who though far away, continue to offer love and support.

And my husband Graham, who stands by in an incredibly supportive role, volunteering his skills and often sacrificing on a personal level so that I can do the work I have been called to. His love for South Africa and her people has been infectious...Even Jonah plays a supportive role. He has become friends with many of the students and offers wisdom as well as encouragement...

And I want to acknowledge all of you who continue to offer prayers and support – often at the most unexpected times! Thank you for responding and being part of the positive change in South Africa!

May God bless you all in this Christmas season!
With joy and gratitude,

Lou Ann

HANDS OF JOY - MISSION STATEMENT

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

To sponsor Christian students who show potential, to attend special High Schools. The aim being to establish a fund that can provide continuing sponsorship for gifted, responsible students in both Art and Academics to achieve a superior secondary and possibly tertiary education and qualification. Ongoing sponsorship will depend on the student's individual performance during each academic year.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

- Social, Emotional and Spiritual support for current and former students sponsored by Hands of Joy.
- Funding Skills Development and Skills Transfer.
- Identifying Potential New Students for Sponsorships in Future.

HANDS OF JOY is a registered charitable organization. If you wish to contribute to it, please contact:

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