



My Love for You

*My love for you is like a fountain.
It is pure and fresh and transparent,
It is vital and continually being renewed.
It is effervescent!*

*My love for you is like a rose.
It is bright and crisp and multi layered.
Deep within, enfolded within,
It is fragrant!*

*My love for you is like a
perennial basil plant.
It is perpetually green and shiny,
Continually pushing forth new leaves.
It is full of aroma!*

UPDATE

We are well into this year of 2010 and there is a momentum in South Africa that is palpable. It is all to do with the 2010 Soccer world Cup that is being hosted here in June and July!

There is so much activity including road upgrades and improved infrastructure...Everyone wants to meet deadlines and take advantage of this remarkable opportunity.

I have been part of a Prayer Initiative that began one year before the tournament and will go right through. It's being led by a woman named Rachael Olusegun from Nigeria, who has an amazing gift for teaching. There is considerable learning on my part as I edit the prayer pointers each week, before they are sent out on the Internet to a growing number of participants...

I am especially grateful for all of the support we have been receiving for Hands of Joy from South Africa, Canada and all over the world! For 2 students to have achieved university degrees and be working in their professions, is truly amazing! I will be like a proud parent at their graduation ceremonies. And I know others will follow...

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

There is an increased enrollment at Riversands to 660 this year due to the fact that schools in Diepsloot are full to capacity, And maybe as well to the food program we have thanks to Milly and her team in the soup kitchen. Children receive nourishing cooked food 3 days a week. However, it puts a strain on the teaching situation if classes become too large; often it's the children who lose out.



Thandie and Nomvula (A Television Producer)

HEALTH CARE CENTRE

Thandie has returned to Riversands after the Christmas break but was very sick over the holidays. It seemed to be grief related and I was saddened by her pain. After rest and more counsel, she is feeling much stronger. I am so thankful for her and the work she does and so are the staff and students at school. Here is a sample of some of the students' situations she is involved with at the beginning of this year...

1. Tsakane Chauke - 9 years - Grade 4

Was knocked down about three weeks ago by an ambulance travelling at high speed with no siren, after school, as she was about to cross the main road (William Nicol) on her way home with some other children. At first she was taken to Fourways NET-CARE as she was unconscious then later she was air-lifted by a Helicopter to Baragwanath Hospital-ICU in Soweto. She is still in a serious state but stable - they have transferred her to High Care ward as she is now semi conscious, due to sedation. She suffered a fractured right foot, concussion and possibly brain damage - was operated -a pin was inserted to join the broken foot. Brain X-rays were taken and fortunately she's ok but has speech difficulty and has to be taken to Jo'burg General for physiotherapy next week, speech therapy and to remove the pin. They are still investigating to see if she hasn't sustained any brain trauma.

Fortunately Donna, who transports learners to Dr Sonia, also saw the accident. She generously donated R1,000 to Tsakane's mother to assist her.

2. Ellen Mphimbya - 7 years - Grade 1 (first year at Riversands)

A beautiful girl but small for her age looked sickly. She had fungal infection on her scalp - spotlessly clean but has bad odour that is caused by the oozing ears and her swollen abdomen.

Apparently it subsides then grows big again after some time. I sent her to Dr Sonia for observation, She referred her to Coronation Hospital where she was admitted (last Thursday). It was a mission to get her parents to take her to the hospital however after threatening to report them to the social workers/police, they eventually did. She is currently under observation, as they suspect she might either have a Cancer or HIV. She was diagnosed with TB and stayed in hospital for 2 weeks. She is still on medication but looking much better and will return for a check up mid March.

3. Hlulani Mathevula – 12years – grade 6

He's just started this year in Riversands. Apparently he has been having a problem with his left eye (which was blood red) with nerves pulling uncomfortably on the side, causing a terrible pain. He was unable to cope in the class, so he was brought by the Principal to the Health Care Centre because he couldn't even write his name. One thing I observed was his posture; his left side of the neck pulled down, you could see that he was in pain. The doctor saw him and referred him to St. John's Eye Hospital immediately as he needed immediate attention to avoid becoming blind. This time, his parents acted promptly. He was admitted and treated for over a week and is now back in school. He's looking better and will be going back to hospital for check up after 2 weeks. He was taken to grade 2 for two weeks, and then from the 5th of March, was moved up to grade 4 for assessment. Still to be observed before taken back to Grade 6 – I have advised that they take him for counselling.

4. Since last week there has been no electricity.

Cables have been stolen and the main box was damaged.... If there's no electricity supply, there's no water. So we had to close early for health reasons. The school is still waiting for Eskom to come and fix the problem.

NB. The problem was miraculously fixed at the beginning of the new week for which we are all so thankful! The first year, I worked at Riversands, I contracted dysentery which is very serious and conditions like no water at the school are a breeding grounds for it...

Again this year, we are looking for basic medicines which have been graciously supplied by a local doctor for several years. We are also looking for food supplies for the children to take home on weekends as well as grey trousers, white shirts and shoes for many children. In election years, the government sometimes provides school uniforms but the election has passed now and we have a new president with 5 wives and 35 children of his own!!!

Nurse Thandie is looking for someone who would be able to transport sick children to see Dr. Sonia on Wednesdays this year, as Donna is leaving for overseas.

ART CENTRE

When the students began in Art class this year, they seemed very tentative (Jill's description) so rather than start right in with the theme of emotions, a project of drawing birds and fish with a lesson on colour and design was introduced. Once they feel

more comfortable, they can begin looking at different emotions and their opposites in keeping with part of the curriculum this term. They will also work with assorted pieces of colorful felt.

There is a donation from the Miniature Society for whom the students make hand printed bags each year. The plan is for students to go by bus to an annual local exhibition of up and coming black artists called Black Like Me. One of the former students from the School for the Arts, exhibits in this show and we will meet him there. He is interested in following up with a workshop for the students at Riversands!

At just the right time, my special friend, Tessa, who taught with me years ago, has shown interest in teaching again. She is available on Tuesdays and is now working with Jill in place of Theresa, who is studying this year.



Jill at the Art Centre

STUDENTS AND THEIR STORIES

On Saturday March 6th, we had a reunion at Cosmo City. This is now home to many of the students who attended School for the Arts years ago and have stayed connected to Hands of Joy. Most of them are now in their mid twenty's and some of the girls joined us this time as well...Its such a privilege to meet and catch up, even though some had other commitments or were working....

I find it most interesting to see how these creative characters look these days as well!

Ashley Mashau is now living in a house at Cosmo City. He is busy studying for his Accounting Degree with UNISA and we continue to sponsor him..

His friend Willem, who received a computer from friends of Hands of Joy and training in Graphic

Design from friends at Ridgeway Church, lives next door. Their friendship has been rekindled and Willem now works in Administration at the new local High School. His goal is to set up a Computer Training Centre and we are looking for computers for him.



Dennis and Ashley at Reunion

Although Dennis Mbatha has not been able to secure the hours that he needs of apprenticeship, he has completed his electrical courses up to level 5. While waiting, he has volunteered to work with Trees for Africa, planting trees in the barren new development of Cosmo City, until he can find an electrician to work with. He is also keen to work with young children in the future.



Abel and his mother at graduation

Abel Mosweu is now a qualified Landscape Architect and is employed by Graham's firm. Half of his first salary cheque, went to pay his younger brother's University fees in Computer Science. Abel has graciously agreed to do building plans and has completed drawings for Thandie's house. He has also agreed to draw plans for Willem Maike to accommodate the Computer Training Centre he dreams of opening.

Gibson Morobane is working as a prison warden, providing wisdom and counsel to prisoners whenever he has opportunity. He reminded me when I met with him recently of the times he was assisting teaching the Grade 7's in Art, being a camp counsellor and making cards to pay his brother's living expenses while he studied. Now that he is working with inmates in the juvenile prison, he realises this was a training ground for this work. From experience he realises, most of the young inmates from 18 to 21, are at about the same level as the students!

With savings from his salary, Gibson has supervised the building of a brick house for his mother in Diepsloot and continues to study towards his Tourism Certificate. He has also started driving lessons with a colleague at the prison who has a car.

His brother Petrus has finished his Business Degree and is working full time as a Loans Officer for Nedbank in down town Johannesburg. Many of you have read the letter of gratitude he wrote to Hands of Joy, outlining just what our support has meant to him over all of these years.

Our musician, Tshepo Machitele has secured a 10 year recording contract with another musician from the Belgian Congo, now living in South Africa. In December, he was interviewed by the Sowetan newspaper about his music. Below is an excerpt...

AFRO-SOULSTER TSHEPO MAKES A STAND AGAINST ABUSE

Lebogang Tsele

Set against the close of the 16 Days of Activism campaign, Afro-soul newcomer, Tshepo Machite has chosen to be part of the solution using his music to heal the nation.

Himself a product of a very difficult upbringing after his mother bailed out on him and his younger brother when he was only 6 years old, Tshepo has seen and been through much in his life. "There are too many parents who are abusing kids and sometimes they don't see that they being abusive," says the soft-spoken lad.

"I believe that parents should inspire their kids. You should be able to look up to your father and mother and I'm thankful for my dad being there while my mother was gone. But some of the things didn't go right, but I also appreciate the fact that he stayed with my brother and I," he adds. Raised by a father he describes as strong and strict, Tshepo found refuge in music and from a very young age just

knew his life would never be complete without it. While still at high school at the East Rand School of the Arts in Benoni, Tshepo also lived at the Sithabile Shelter where he interacted with kids who've been raped and abused. Using their stories and his own he composed the song, 'Mother, Father' where he speaks out against the abuse of children by those who should protect them.

Getting a record deal, he says, was the best day of his life and adds that being able to study music is something that made him feel free. "It is something that gave me a reason to live. It made me believe in myself more. I am able to do anything that I put my mind to," he says. Inspired by seeing people make a difference in their community, Tshepo says he'd like to go all over the world, to see people that inspired him.

When he was in Pretoria to meet with his mentor, I met with Tshepo. About the article, he was apologetic. He explained that he told the reporter all about our valuable assistance during this time...He wanted to assure me how grateful he is for all of the assistance and support from Hands of Joy over all of these years. He is working at a grocery store to support himself. When he is ready to go on tour with his first CD, he assures me that his friend Sibusiso Miya will design his wardrobe. In this way, the boys hope to launch Sibusiso in business as well.



Tshepo Machitele

His brother Duke, only wants to dance and since graduating from high school has been teaching others to dance and auditioning. He made the final auditions in Johannesburg for a dance troupe but was cut on the final day. Although this was disappointing, we have just learned that Duke will be one of the Hip Hop dancers who will open for the Soccer World Cup at the stadium in Soweto. It seems that the people involved also want to sponsor him to attend the dance school of his choice. Wouldn't that be wonderful?

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Although Tommy is doing well at SSB Matric Centre, some of his teachers are convinced he can do even better if he applies himself. When I met with him to discuss this, he said that he has a hard time with studying and writing exams. Remembering when Dennis had the same problem, I asked the Principal if he could have some tuition in study habits and she was only too happy to set up a series of meetings for him! We are looking forward to the results of this as next year will be his final year of high school.



Tommy Makhuru at SSB Matric Centre

The girls who were sponsored to SSB - Patricia through Randburg Rotary Anne's and Zanele through Hands of Joy directly - found the work load challenging, as well as the long hours of school and no sport. Only after the first two years of High School, does sport resume as the time is needed to bridge the gaps in the students' learning...

At the end of the year, Zanele received the Top Achiever award in both Social Science and Economic Management Sciences. Patricia was proud to have been one of the top 5 Achievers in all of her subjects!!! Well done ladies...

Mavis Morobane, who is in her final year of High School at Bophelo Impilo, has excelled and been chosen to be a prefect. She will enjoy 2 outings during the school year and has expressed both her excitement and gratitude to have this opportunity to study through generous sponsors of Hands of Joy...

The other 2 girls at Bophelo, Zandile and Lesego, are struggling as both have come through incredibly difficult times and circumstances. Whenever we can, we organise counselling and this year, each of these students will have opportunities to be counselled at school.

IN CONCLUSION

No doubt, in the months of June and July during the 2010 Soccer World Cup, you will hear much about South Africa. As a Nation, we are proud to be hosting such a popular International event.

Over Easter, we were privileged to have a trip to Nature's Valley in the Western Cape Province which features a lagoon and one of the most pristine, picturesque beaches in the world. We spent our days swimming canoeing and hiking accompanied of my niece Christie from Canada. She was captivated by the beauty of the valley as well as the wildlife and mountainous terrain along the way as we drove. (1500kms each way)

For the next 4 weeks, Christie will be living with us and working on an international

placement with a South African Graphic Design Firm. She is in her 4th year of a Graphic Design Program at Algonquin College in Ottawa, where she lives. We are all enjoying her visit and getting to know her better as Christie was only 3 years old when we left for South Africa. She is now a confident and beautiful young woman of 21. Her abilities as a Graphic Designer are impressive and she is going to design a website for me and some artists while she is here. She has also agreed to design a website for Hands of Joy and format these newsletters in future!

May this be a year filled with joy!

God bless you,

With love and gratitude,

Lou Ann

HANDS OF JOY - MISSION STATEMENT

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

- To introduce and teach Art and Church to underprivileged African children at Riversands Primary School in a manner that will enrich their lives by stimulating faith, creativity and confidence.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

- Where possible, to meet the children's immediate physical needs for food, clothing and medical attention.
- To develop ways to empower unemployed parents and former students by teaching skills and creating job opportunities thereby helping to restore confidence and the ability to provide for their families.
- To sponsor Christian students who show some potential to attend special high schools. The aim is to continue a scholarship fund that will sponsor gifted, responsible students in both Art and Academics to attend secondary schools for continuing education. This has been largely dependent on donations.

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

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