

Dear friends of House of Encouragement

Helping orphans to help themselves is an important part when we seek to further the individual potential of the children. It is basic for a sustainable development and future for the individual. Right from the beginning our concept of taking care of the children at the center included helping with homework and general educational support. The repetition of certain themes from the primary school is often combined with playful exercises. Some children need more attention than others. For instance Mpumi, the hearing impaired child in our family, she gets therapeutic support daily at the center and is taken to the speech therapist at the hospital and a nearby clinic several times a week. We want to help the children, as they need it. The caregiver team is always open to listen to and to answer school related questions. They are working with books from the primary school.

This year we were able to launch two major projects to further the children on a broad scale.



Since August, the biology student Katlego Shabalala comes to the center twice a week to give private lessons in mathematics for different age groups and for individual children. After each lesson the learners also have to do some work in writing.

Already after a few months we were able to see the success of this support. Most High School kids have achieved clearly better results in the exams of the last quarter. Many have lost their fear of this major subject and feel liberated from a lot of pressure. As it is important for Katlego to create some income for his study, it is a real win-win situation.

Many scholars in the townships struggle with weak reading abilities. Especially English is a challenge for many, because mostly it is only taught as from grade four in the Primary Schools. In addition, often children grow up with two native languages while for the future good English skills are decisive, being it for work or further education. That was the motivation to launch the "Word4Word Reading Therapy" project in October. This is not only meant for the children in our center, but is also run in the Primary School Lesedi-Potlana and involves educators, parents and foster parents as well as our caregiver team.

Word4Word has been run in schools in other areas of South Africa and in Namibia. It is a joint effort of teachers and parents (in our case legal guardians and caregivers) to support the children in active communication. One focuses on especially subjects that interest the individual child. With specific questions or information and literature on the subject the children learn about "their" topic (e.g. football, cooking, wildlife, etc.) and read and talk about it. Experience shows that students embrace reading without pressure and this has a direct affect on their learning behaviour. The development of a reading culture is supported by library (yet to be established) and with Internet access. With computerized reading tests in the local language or in English reading skills is detected and progress checked over time.

As a motivator for the children and as "Ambassador" for the project Temba Bavuma is involved. Temba is a young cricketer who has made it to the South African national team. As a top athlete, he is a role model and hero for the African population. He will be engaged as a promoter of the project helping to raise funds for the infrastructure and equipment of the library. The more than 700 children of primary school Lesedi-Potlana listened carefully when Temba spoke about the importance of education and continuous learning. The individual reading culture will be an important key for the goals and Word4Word will help in this process.



Children, teachers and parents celebrate the sports idol.



The personal words left a great impression.



About 80 parents were informed about the project ...



... and expressed their will to support the children.

Our team of caregivers was trained together with teachers to enable them to tackle the reading therapy individually with the children in the center. Word4Word brought lots of tips and games, which bring about reading for children in a natural way in everyday life. Word4Word is a project to further on a broad base and yet it speaks to the individual child.

The fact that focused learning and a full commitment at school pays off is proven Lebogang Hopane. 2013 we could send her as the first girl from our center to the Private School Cornerstone College in Pretoria. The move from the Township School to one of the leading colleges in Pretoria was a big challenge for her. However, Lebogang has make use of the opportunity and fought from the beginning to make up and succeed. The hard work has been worthwhile and she achieved and grew in personality during the past 3 years. She was elected as a leader in college, which especially also confirmed her exemplary character on top of her academic performance.

Lebogang wrote the Matric exams the past weeks and passed with flying colours. From the University of Pretoria she has already been admitted as a student for the study as a teacher. We trust that based on her achievements the application for a scholarship will be accepted. In addition to that, we will be able to help her financially during her study with the dedicated donation House of Encouragement receives for the intellectual furtherance of individuals.

Asked whether she would like to work as a teacher in a private school in the city one day, she replied: "I will definitely go back to the Township and work there as a teacher. I want to give back something where I come from and where good education is urgently needed. As a girl from Soshanguve I want to reinvest into the children that will never be given a chance in life, as I have experienced it,"



We were very proud of Lebogang at the great day of her Matric Farewell Party.

Not everything may end as a success story, and things often turn out differently than one thinks or plans. Much to our surprise we recently had to accept that our plans to add on to our building were rejected by the authorities. We wanted to build two classrooms and enlarge the kitchen (see our last newsletter). Of course, this was a disappointment, especially also for our staff team. Nevertheless, this negative decision also has a positive side. We can now fully concentrate on the Skill Center project and include the infrastructure for working with the older children from the care center in this building project. We trust that the site will not be too far away from Lesedi-Potlana and will report more about it next year.

We know and see that all the orphans in our center are incredibly grateful for what they receive and experience throughout the year. They are especially thankful at the end of the year - even without Christmas gifts. As a thank you to their grandmothers and foster parents they will perform for them a play about the Christmas story at the center. They would like to do the same for all the sponsors from Switzerland. The children understand that there would be no center for them without your financial support from Switzerland.

It is therefore a special concern of the children that we pass on their gratitude and the heartfelt thanks of the center family to the friends of House of Encouragement. We combine these thanks with our best wishes for a lovely holiday season and a Merry Christmas. May 2016 be a year of good health, joy and success in all that lies ahead of you.

Thank you for your loyal support. Maybe you consider mentioning to family and friends that a commitment with the work done for the orphans in Soshanguve is rewarding and worthwhile.

House of Encouragement

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Walter und Estelle Bosshard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'W'.

Walter und Estelle Bosshard