

## ST ANDREW'S COLLEGE GRADE 8 HIKE - 2010 REPORT

How many schools in the world take the initiative to send their youngest boys hiking in the most pristine veld on earth for 5 days? How many schools in the world can send 100 rookie boys into the wild to receive them back having learnt the meaning of living with nature, rather than taking it for granted? Probably very few and certainly very few who can boast of having the incredible veld that we are fortunate to have in the Eastern Cape and a generous farming community who are very willing to allow us access to their land.

This year's hike and camping experience was unique in that it is the first time that the grade 8's (the so-called new boys) have undertaken a mini long walk, rather than the usual 5 day camp in one place. The hike began from Upper field as is the tradition, in 35 degree heat. Two teams of about 50 boys and 5 staff each left College in different directions, spending the first night in different areas, before eventually meeting up after two days at Hilton Farm, home of Mr John White. They spent two nights camping at Hilton before departing in the opposite directions for the return home to Grahamstown.

The hike, which had its fair share of teams struggling to find their way through the thick bush, gave many boys their first experience of cooking their own food, and learning to come to terms with themselves. It also included dam swimming, a one day outing into a seldom seen area, fun, laughter and camaraderie and was walked with great spirit by the boys and the staff. One boy in particular, surprised us all by showing that he can actually walk with pace! After initially struggling to come to terms with not having tents to sleep in, the boys became wonderfully creative with their bivvies and built excellent structures to keep out the snakes, the wind and the cold. Their veld sculptures and creative presentations by torch and firelight, were without doubt the best I have ever seen. Mr Basil Mills, with his python and all his war stories provided entertainment for the boys on the second night as they were treated to some hair-raising stories of escape, danger and stunt action. Each evening ended with very meaningful discussion and prayer on the importance of coming to terms with who we are, who we could emulate and how best to become that person. The entire grade 8 group did themselves proud! In particular, the eight group leaders deserve special mention – they did an excellent job and we commend them for it!

Every hike is different but every hike is dependent on good organisation and good support. Special thanks goes to the staff who undertook this hike, namely Ms Taylor, Mr Thipe, Mr Jonono, Mr Ellis, Mr Cuyler, Mr Hobson, Mr Pretorius, Mrs Bouwer, Mr Eksteen, Mr Maffessanti, Mr Renard and Mr Molony (who provided home base support). Their excellent teamwork and hilarious jokes around the camp fire will long be remembered.

In closing, some of the comments from the group leaders best sums up the spirit with which whole camp was undertaken: *"I feel privileged to work with the other leaders and the teachers. It is getting harder to communicate with my team mates as we have strong leaders and individuals in this group, but we managed to find activities that bond us (together)". "We set out on a really long walk, which would take up to 7 hours. When we were nearing the end, some started to 'crack' and it was a real test of our character". "I was ambushed by other group members – but I was glad to have members of my group rescue me, showing that as a team we work really well and look out for each other"*.

We look forward to Hike 2011!

**Keith van Winkel**

Camp (D)amager