



## Introduction

This winter solstice newsletter was written amidst winter chill at a remote school, a project of the Winterberg Trust, as I continued the search for possible scholarship candidates. I'd driven through the most remarkable beauty to look out on mountain-top grassland, and regard the work of many farmers, Andreans and non-Andreans, for whom difficulties became challenges which did not dismay. This school and the Trust speak volumes of possibilities, and the depth of a community's commitment. It was humbling to be there.



Sosebenza Community School, a project of the Winterberg School Trust

## St Matthew's

We have focussed this term on doing the sorts of things schools do together; debating, playing sport in home and away fixtures and extending beyond that to the planning of residential academic camps and combined President's Award activities, including a Gold level residential project, in which St Andrew's and DSG pupils will live at St Matthew's mission for a week.

At a meeting between Rhodes and the Keiskammahoek community, it was gratifying to hear our partner school being considered as a centre of excellence and a possible base for Rhodes activities. At that meeting the stark developmental challenges of the St Matthew's community were clarified. Fewer than 15% of households have access to clean running water, and far fewer than that to proper sanitation. Running large boarding houses for girls with limited and intermittent water supply has remained a serious challenge. The Historic Schools Project is currently laying new pipelines to the mission and school, and the sense that the community is looking to make progress is palpable. The hostel renovation project is underway, as is the building of a conference centre on the mission site and the possible conversion of the rectory into a care home for the aged.



Football vs St Matthew's at St Matthew's

DSG's computer technicians have been working with Sifunde Kunye, a donor sponsored NGO based at St Matthews, to install and connect computer networks there and at four other sites in the Amatolas. The satellite link 'went live' in May, and we soon hope to improve communication, such that we can provide learner support between St Andrew's/DSG and St Matthew's and the surrounding schools.

## Grade 10 service clubs

A netball court of Grade 4, Grade 5 and College boys, running, playing, throwing, skipping, heads sometimes bent over books, hushed voices reading, excited shouts as balls are kicked, hit, passed from hand to hand... Our boys have done well, learned that the opposite of boredom isn't entertainment, but engagement, and in the process the children of the Good Shepherd School had overwhelmingly positive experiences.

## President's Award

With such large numbers of boys enrolled, the main challenge is providing enough service opportunities. Sunday activities, which proved popular in the Easter term, have not been as well supported. Boys have been involved in the usual round of food gardening for the Good Shepherd feeding scheme, helping at the SPCA, and collections for a number of civic organisations.

Michael Bennett of Espin proposed a replacement for the soccer-ball project of 2010, and with the other Grade 10s on the President's Award Committee, has been gathering donations from boys in their houses to buy blankets for orphans and vulnerable children. They have not only been massively successful in the number of blankets purchased, but also raising our whole school's awareness of how cold it must be for those without our comforts. We will report on this project more fully in next term's newsletter.

Gtown Funk, which has become a combined project with the DSG's Interact Club, was a great success with positive participation from a number of Grahamstown schools. Funds raised (a wonderful by-product of this fun project designed, driven and performed by young people for young people), were donated to the Grahamstown Amasango Career School, who educate former street children.



**Moses Iputo handing over cheques from St Andrew's President's Award and DSG's Interact Club to Grahamstown Amasango Career School**

## Hospice Yellow Ribbon Day

We were delighted by the positive response from our community on the 1st Friday of the term, as almost every boy, teacher and staff member put on a yellow ribbon (and made a small donation) and contributed to a raised awareness of the needs of others, in this case those with terminal illness. Not only did house reps on the Community Engagement Committee "sell-out" of ribbons, but many boys elected to make larger donations than the R5 requested.

## Mandela Day

On the 17th of July, in celebration of our former President's birthday, we asked all in our community to give one hour of service to others outside of the school. Each house tackled its own project, led by Grade 11s, and the staff took on a project of their own. I look forward to reporting more fully on the variety of activities that took place in the next newsletter.



**The boarders from Espin House visited Eluxolweni Children's Shelter on Sunday to do their 67 minutes for Mandela Day.**



Boys from Upper House cleared Black Wattle alien trees on Sunday to do their 67 minutes for Mandela Day.



Staff members participate in the painting of the Kowie Ditch bridge

## Academic extension

Over half-term some of the children who have been attending academic extension classes on Friday afternoons were invited to write scholarship exams that could lead them to becoming College boys or DSG girls. This is very exciting, but also sad, as we know the number of places are limited. In speaking to the principals of our partner schools, they were very kind in their reflection of the impact, saying that, not only had the children's academic performance shown significant improvement, but that the children had also gained in confidence and the sorts of skills that would assist in entry interviews to any school. The 'first-fruits' of this programme were bitter-sweet, with two of the girls being awarded full scholarships to Kingswood, with immediate effect. During the state school holidays (and over half term) we ran a reading club for children from Grahamstown East. We played word games, did paired reading and even a bit of running around. At the end of these sessions we had to prise the children out of the D&T centre so they could go home.



Martin Chandler and Andrew Keeton helping with the holiday reading club



Blaise Atoliyah, David de Souza and Sheldan Dolf playing during holiday reading club

## The second "half"

The next part of the term has been very busy with resumption of all normal service activities, as well as the St Matthew's maths camp in Grahamstown, Mandela day, planning for the Gold President's Award Residential project at St Matthews, the Good Shepherd Outdoor Education expedition, Science Camp as well as the resumption of winter sports, the tail end of the Festival and examinations. It's very busy. I wouldn't have it any other way. I look forward to reporting on all this in our next newsletter.

Warm Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Barnard".

Tim Barnard