

NET VIR PRET

PROGRESS REPORT - APRIL 2023

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THE LIFE AND TIMES OF DUKE THE ZEBRA

We brought 2022 a close by mounting our annual **Giant Puppet Show** in December on the Day of Reconciliation in the amphitheatre at our local primary school. Titled ***The Life and Times of Duke the Zebra***,

the show was watched by a huge crowd drawn from both parts of our divided village, with 130 youngsters taking part. The central character was a young, zebra, torn from his parents and siblings and thrust into the **Barrydale Zoo** where he is tormented by a nasty **Ostrich** who wants to know whether he's white or black. The show attempted to raise awareness that we share this beautiful and fragile planet with other sentient creatures who also have hopes and fears and whose lives are obstructed in countless ways by thoughtless humans. We also found the opportunity to ask questions about imposed identity in a society like ours where, every time we fill in a form, we are still



Poster designed by **Benjamin Joubert** - one of our youngsters who now has a **Diploma in Graphic Design** from the **College of Cape Town**.

required to select our "racial" category.



Under the guidance of the **Handspring Puppet Company**, the **Centre for Humanities Research** at **UWC** and the **Ukwanda Puppetry Collective**, our staff, Interns and several youngsters have over the years achieved a high degree of competence in theatre skills – directing, story-telling, scripting, acting, puppet manipulation, riel dance, composition of lyrics and musical accompaniment, creation of digital sound effects, photography, filming, set, mask and puppet design and construction. The 2022 Show was created and produced entirely by our own team.

Sudonia Kouter was appointed Director. She was assisted by **Gabriel Buis**, a Net vir Pret youngster recently returned from a two-year acting course with the **Magnet Theatre** in Cape Town.

Herman Witbooi was tasked with the design and construction of the new Zebra



puppet. In this he was kindly assisted by **Vivienne Eich** who has built puppets for major film sets. The outcome was a beautiful young Zebra puppet manipulated by 13-year old **Jackwin du Toit** - *pictured right*.



Additional puppet characters included an **Ostrich**, a **Baby Elephant** and a **Baby Rhino** (kindly on loan from Handspring), several **Tortoises** and **Dassies**,

an **Eland**, a **Dog**, a **Baboon** a **Peacock** and a **Flying Owl**. Our young **Musicians**

provided both background music and specially composed lyrics to mark the high points in the show and our **Riel Dancers** contributed their understanding of the special relationship the ancient **San** people had with their fellow creatures. The performance was attended by a huge crowd from both sides of our village as well as many others from far and wide who had travelled in for the much-anticipated event.



CHRISTMAS HAMPERS

For the third year running we delivered generous **Food Hampers** to needy families in Barrydale and on the farms in the days running up to Christmas. The driving force behind this endeavour is Barrydale volunteer **Sally Haines** who enlisted the help of her Dutch friend **Magriet van Straaten**. Magriet turned to her friends and neighbours for support and their response has been overwhelming, resulting in **50 families of 6 being fed in 2020, 80 in 2021 and 126 in 2022**.



Magriet is on a visit to Barrydale at the time of writing and she is helping Herman organise supply-chain work stations in his Carpentry Studio.

GIRLS ONLY WORKSHOP

Early in 2023 we collaborated with the local **Clinic** and the **ACVV Social Worker** to address a set of problems of great concern.

- Teenage girls in our community sometimes fall victim to inappropriate sexual relationships with older men;
- There is a high rate of teenage pregnancy;
- Being sexually active from an early age exposes teenage girls to sexually transmitted infections;
- Families in our community are trapped in cycles of poverty because they do not have (or choose not to have) the option to plan when to have children.

Our Senior Youth Worker **Sudonia Kouter**, Board member **Elizabeth Beer**, Social Worker **Anneline Zilch** and Clinic Sister **Isabella Oberholzer** joined hands to devise a workshop with the following outcomes:

- To develop and strengthen the ability of children and young people to make mindful, informed, healthy and respectful choices regarding relationships and sexuality which links to their emotional and physical health;
- To enable young women to be more in charge of their reproductive decisions;
- To enable young women and children to know the direct line of support they can access whenever they might have the need.

The first workshop was held in February. More are to follow and we are planning a similar venture for our **Boys Only Programme**. The initiative was kindly funded by the **Leggatt Trust** (UK).

RESTORATION OF MUNICIPAL PLAYGROUND

It came to our notice that the only playground available to youngsters in our township had fallen into serious disrepair. The area had become overgrown and the swings and Jungle Gym had been vandalised with large parts rusting or missing.



Our team decided to clean up and undertake repair work. Staff members **Herman Witbooi** and **Daylon Pienaar** led a group of youngsters in this endeavour and the



playground is now functioning again. Many thanks to volunteer **Graham Abbott** who got involved in his usual hands-on way and especially to **Midas** who donated the paint.



KLEIN KAROO NATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL



Young artists **Benjamin Joubert**, **Chilton Neethling** and **Rickwin Damons**, all Net vir Pret protégées, were trained by local artist **Corina Loe** ahead of the **ABSA**-sponsored week-long **Klein Karoo National Arts Festival (KKnK)** to create art works using string as the medium.





This newfound skill enabled them to create six works that were showcased at the KKnK Festival over Easter. They are now working on a collection of new works to be on display at the **Barrydale Karoo Art Hotel**.

Rickwin, the youngest of the team, is also developing as an accomplished potter. Here he is managing our stall at the **Karoo Daisy monthly market**.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Our Senior Youth Worker, **Sudonia Kouter**, attended a 5-day course on Community Art Centre Management. Organised by the **Stand Foundation** and facilitated by the **University of Stellenbosch Business School**, the course focused on sustainability, finance, marketing and communications.

Sudonia was presented with the **Top Achiever Award**.

As mentioned above, our chief puppet builder **Herman Witbooi** has been working with **Vivienne Eich** who has introduced him to new



much lighter and more malleable material and easier ways of upscaling from small maquettes. We're

delighted to report that this training will continue in 2023.



OTHER NEWS

- **Barrydale's Got Talent!**

Led by volunteer **Graham Abbott**, we are planning a **Talent Show** in the week of national **Youth Day** in June. Multiple activities are included and entries and auditions are well underway.



- **Swellendam Agricultural Show**

We were again invited to bring our puppets to entertain the crowds at the annual **Swellendam Agricultural Show**.

We took **Duke the Zebra**, the **Ostrich**, the **Songololo**, the **Flying Owl**, the **Tortoise** and the **Baboon** to the delight of everyone.



- **Library Week**

We were invited to perform on **Human Rights Day** at the opening of **Library Week** in **Swellendam**. Our founder **Peter Takelo** and youth worker and rapper **Selanvor**



Platjies both took part, Peter singing with his guitar and telling stories and Selanvor reciting his poetry. The celebration continued the next day in our home town of



Barrydale where our **Interns** joined the performers in a staging of their play dealing with gender-based violence. The deputy chair of our **Board**, **Fanny Nortje**, entertained the audience with stories from the past after which our youngsters were able to participate in the many activities on offer.

- **Chess Tournament**

Our **Chess Team** took part in the **Overberg Chess Tournament** in March with 5 of our young players qualifying to go forward to the **Western Cape Provincial Trials** in the Strand next month. They are **Carlton Lombard** (under 15), **Jywan Karelse** (under 17), **Warren Pekeur** (under 17), **Stanwill Jambo** (under 17) – all of whom were awarded **Bronze Medals**. The fifth player is **Jaywin du Toit** (under 19) who brought home a **Gold Medal**.



- **Easter Holiday School**

Our first Holiday School for the year ran in the week before Easter. We focused on sport activities, including traditional games and also chess and yoga. 204 youngsters attended.



We also ran a four-day street soccer tournament, identifying four areas in our village, setting up nets in each area and then inviting teams to register to compete.

The event was so successful that we plan to make it a yearly fixture.



VISITORS

- **EDSA** director **Jude Brown** came on her annual visit and spent 6 weeks with us, helping in countless ways but especially with updating our policy documents and job descriptions. She was joined for a fortnight by EDSA trustee **Linda Richards** who also lent a helping hand and by her 15-year old grandson **Alfred** who teamed up with our Interns. Jude also helped us think through a new management structure which is going to lead to even greater efficiency in our work.
- **Marion** and **Dave Barton** from **Canterbury** visited after many years' absence. They responded to an appeal we had launched on Facebook for assistance for two of our school-leavers, **Alex-Zane Pekeur** and **Macleigh de Vlam**, who had both performed excellently in the matric exam and been accepted by the **University of the Western Cape** for admission to the **B Com** course for Macleigh and **B Ed** for Zane, who would be training to qualify as a Maths and Life Sciences teacher. The problem was that they were struggling to meet the down-payment of R5,000 the University required. Marion and Dave and their friends came up with the R10,000 and the two young men were able to register.
- **Michael** and **Carmel Chanarin**, long-time benefactors of Net vir Pret, came on their annual visit to Barrydale and, as ever, showed interest and support for our work. Not least, Michael introduced his brother **Saul** who brought with him two highly marketable jigsaw puzzles for youngsters made from plywood. He is now training us in the manufacture of these puzzles which is going to help us bring in much-needed income.
- **Susan** and **Colin McAllister**, also resident in the **UK**, returned after a 3-year absence and came on several visits to our Centre bringing gifts and showering us with praise for our work.
- **Mosa le Roux** from the **Rolf-Stephan Nussbaum Foundation** which has funded us since 2018 spent a day with us and later wrote to confirm their ongoing support.
- We feed 200+ youngsters every day and so we were delighted when the **International Association for Human Values** came to donate much appreciated crockery and cutlery in the shape of 150 cups, bowls, knives, forks and spoons. This is making for the much smoother running of our feeding scheme now that all youngsters their own bowls and implements. Thank you to **Wild Dog Photography** for arranging the handover.



FUNDING

We were able to take our work forward in the months since our last report (October 2022) with deeply appreciated grants from the **Stand Foundation**, the **Allan and Gill Gray Philanthropy** advised by **Richard Rosenthal**, our UK partners **EDSA (Education for Democracy in South Africa)** and the **Rolf-Stephan Nussbaum Foundation**.

When these funds ran out and we were facing a looming collapse, it is with deep gratitude that we are able to report that we were saved by support from several private sources.

These include:

- Donations in celebration of **Gerald Phillips's 80th birthday**.
- A Backabuddy appeal **in memory of Clive Nel** launched by his daughter Jenny.
- Donations in celebration of **the marriage of Sharon and Philip Howes**.
- Donations from **Josephine Frater, Bev Gillespie, Johan Maree, Anne Page** (UK), **Norma Rudolph** (FI), and **Zoe Wicomb** (UK).
- **Michael and Carmel Chanarin** and **Brian and Joan Wides** continued their generous sponsorship over many years.

BREAKING NEWS

We are pleased to report that **Elizabeth Beer** will be joining our team in the portfolio of **Fundraiser**.
