March 2012

We were overwhelmed by your generosity in supporting our now-famous annual seaside party – with your help, we were able to give over 1 500 children a wonderful outing. That’s amazing, when you consider that our first seaside outing back in 2000 was attended by 300 children. Thank you so much!

Here at home, we had rather unusual support – in the form of stand-up! Local entertainers and comedians John Vlismas, Kurt Schoonraad and Marcel Oudejans gave Capetonians an evening of magic and laughter to raise funds for the seaside outing – we were bowled over!

We also had our usual fantastic support from local volunteers – fifteen hundred children take quite some looking after! We’re so grateful to our dedicated friends for their love, time and energy. And once again, the Cape Town City Council provided staff to help entertain the little ones, with face-painting and games galore.

We heard from one grateful father that his little girl insisted on sleeping with her gift pack – the next morning, she told her family she didn’t want to go to school – she wanted to go back to the sea!

Sun, sea, sand, singing, games, little gifts and a good lunch – you and I might take these small treats for granted as part of a nice day out with the family. But for these children from the most poverty-stricken townships around Cape Town, your kindness made a day of pure magic they’ll remember forever.

It always saddens us that there are children who live only a few miles from Cape Town’s fabled beaches – and yet they have never even seen the sea. So it was wonderful to see the expressions on the little faces when they arrived. It’s a privilege to share these precious moments with you – and our heartfelt thanks go out to you for making them possible. Enjoy the pictures!

“Oh, we do like to be beside the seaside...!”

We’re tickled... fundraising funnymen get Breadline Africa staff giggling...
In our last newsletter, we told you about our hugely successful Mandela Day campaign in partnership with the Mandela Foundation – how our initial plan to put one school container library in every province of the country grew beyond anything we could imagine. We had such fantastic responses from so many – most of all, yourselves – that we keep converting, equipping and installing new libraries!

Last September and October we were able to provide five more new libraries, all in areas of extreme poverty, at schools desperate for resources. In most cases, it was the first time these children had ever had access to a library.

It’s a special joy to go to the opening of these libraries. Each one is different – sometimes there is singing and dancing, the school or community band plays, local ministers say heartfelt prayers of thanks. It’s always a moving moment, and one thing all these ceremonies have in common is the excitement and pride on the faces of the learners and their teachers.

Thank you for being part of our team for this very special project, along with local businesses, clubs and councils. As one of the youngsters at Nobuntu Primary said, “If young people fail, everything will fail.” We’re determined to do our best to stop that from happening, and with your help, we know we can succeed!

These are the schools that are now enjoying their brand new libraries and media centres, filled with bright books and posters: Mid-Ennerdale Primary in Gauteng (1); Valspan Primary in the Northern Cape Province (2); Nobuntu Senior Primary in the Eastern Cape (5), as well as schools in the tiny Eastern Cape villages of Qunu (Qunu Junior School) (4) and Mvezo (Nkwenkezi Junior School) (3) where Nelson Mandela grew up.
We were thrilled to welcome back a small group of people with big hearts – yes, our trustees came to visit in October last year! These dedicated folk are at the very heart of what Breadline Africa is and does. They couldn’t wait to get stuck in, hitting the road to take a close look at our many projects that are alleviating local poverty and changing lives for the better, enjoying a reception with Helen Zille, the Premier of the Western Cape, and finally, sitting down for that all-important strategy meeting. This is where our achievements and projects are closely examined, and plans are made for the most effective way forward.

The first three days were packed with visits to the dusty townships that surround Cape Town and the rural areas further away. The trustees were extremely interested in seeing the physical results of hard work and a LOT of help from generous donors and local communities. It was especially moving seeing the little nursery-schools that often grew from a kind woman’s impulse to welcome small children into her humble shack.

Next came the reception held by Breadline Africa at the famous Castle, the oldest building in Cape Town, to welcome the Trustees and to celebrate Breadline Africa’s successful partnership with the Nelson Mandela Foundation. The guest speaker Premier Zille began her speech by saying how proud she was that we as an NGO would host an event to say thank you.

Then it was time to knuckle down to assess the past and prepare for the future – a challenge for all those raising funds in a global recession. More and more information suggests that our decision to focus on children, and especially on early learning, is absolutely vital.

Of South Africa’s children, a shocking 60% live in poverty, with education their only hope of a way out. Yet the majority of children have no access to any kind of early learning experience, such as nursery-schools or preschools. This as new research shows that strong early learning experiences provide a critical foundation for literacy and numeracy later on. So many children are being left behind at the starting line – or not even making it to that line in the first place.

Meanwhile, the small percentage that do get to preschools may not be so lucky. Of the 24 000 preschools in South Africa, only 5% meet the standards for excellence, while 40% simply do not provide any kind of early learning experience – they are essentially baby-sitting services, with carers rather than teachers, who simply watch the little ones.

An interesting study shows that teenagers who had some sort of early learning experience are less likely to take drugs, turn to crime or fall pregnant – and their chances of finding a job rise. And it’s clear that investment in this area has huge benefits for society and the economy.

So you can expect to see a lot more of our efforts going towards supporting early learning projects, whether these are nursery-schools or libraries. We hope we’ve convinced you of the importance of following this path!

For a slideshow of all the projects our trustees visited, please go to http://www.slideshare.net/breadlineafrica/trustees-visit-october-2011

Twenty heads are better than one... our trustees meet to plan for the future.

Helen Zille, Premier of the Western Cape, is flanked by Hugh Winters (RSA Advisory Committee Chairperson) and Tim Smith.

Ulwazi Educare Centre in Delft – one of the many Breadline Africa projects visited by the trustees.
Breadline Africa on the road

A trip up North

Limpopo is the northernmost province of South Africa, and home to much of the well-known Kruger National Park. Tourists come from all over the world to admire the wildlife and the scenic landscapes. It’s also a place of poverty and bumpy dirt roads, huge anthills and mysterious mopane trees, with rural villages far from the major cities. Gail Dreyer and Harry Grainger set off on the long trek from Johannesburg to visit some of the projects Breadline Africa supports.

“Our first stop was at Khanimamba, an education, training and development organisation that supports local early childhood development programmes, with help from the local municipality.

We visited several of the day-care centres linked to Khanimamba. These support many orphans, and many more of the little ones have only one parent, often hardly more than a child herself – a sad consequence of poverty and unemployment.

We were moved by the dedication of the staff – especially the inspiring principals – working at these little rural preschools. We also loved seeing the food gardens – bursting with spinach, pumpkin and corn – that most schools had planted, but were shocked at the lack of proper toilet facilities. Staff and children often had to use little more than a hole in the ground. Local chiefs are happy to donate land for ablution facilities, so we have work to do here!

We also met the “care groups” set up as part of the Elim Care Group community intervention. These have been going since 1976, and were first set up to combat trachoma – an eye disease that causes blindness. Since then, they have tackled the problems of HIV/AIDS, poor sanitation and orphaned children.

The groups work on a volunteer basis in the local communities, and we were amazed to find how many elderly women were actively running ‘drop-in centres’ where they prepared food for vulnerable children, did home visits, and taught important life-skills to orphans.

We were overwhelmed at the vibrancy of the volunteers we met, and touched to be welcomed with singing and dancing wherever we went. It was also humbling to be thanked, repeatedly, for the support that Breadline Africa gives.”

Beyond the border – a trip to Namibia

Breadline Africa is getting more active in the Southern African region, so our Director Tim Smith headed off to the vast neighbouring country of Namibia to visit Positive Vibes, an organisation that gives support and education to AIDS orphans and people living with HIV/AIDS in Namibia.

“First stop was the city of Windhoek and the Positive Vibes head office, where we talked about common goals and future planning, looking at ways we could learn from and work with each other. Next came trips to the townships and the paediatric ward of Katutura hospital – the hospital has over 1300 children, many born infected with HIV, on medication that offers them a chance at a normal life. I was deeply moved to hear one little girl talk about her plans to be a doctor.

Then came a trip by small plane to Ovamboland, the northern, wetter part of this dry country. Here I got to see the community-based facilitation process in action – folk from the communities, who are often HIV-positive themselves, run workshops to educate communities about the illness, to break down stigma, and to help affected people find their inner strength and grow. I witnessed children performing a wonderful play about the challenges they face, and watched workshops being held under trees. Truly a memorable visit.”
Thanks to your generous responses...

Hope in Art – an especially beautiful fundraiser!

Hope in Art is a biennial art competition open to anyone over the age of 16 – viewers vote for the winners, so it’s very democratic. All this creativity and beauty, AND Breadline Africa benefits: all the entries are for sale, and 50% of the proceeds go to our projects! It’s a win-win situation, and we appreciate it very much indeed. Our sincere congratulations go to Peter Hawkins and Brendon Erasmus, the 2011 winners. Visit http://www.hopeinart.com to see more!

Ain’t no mountain high enough

A (very) high five to Steven D’Souza, whose friends challenged him to climb Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. This is the highest mountain in Africa and the tallest freestanding snow-covered equatorial mountain on earth – climbing it is no easy feat! In turn, he asked his friends to sponsor him, with Breadline Africa to benefit from all the proceeds. Well done, Steve! You and your friends have made us proud.

The isolated children of Villiersdorp and their hard-working teachers are ecstatic – they no longer have to sit in the dust or squeeze into a single run-down room for classes. Thanks to you, they’re now enjoying this beautiful new double-container classroom!

Beaming with happiness: because of your kind hands stretched out across the miles, these wastepickers who scrape a living by collecting recycling from a rural dump had full tummies this Christmas – and their children got their first ever small gifts!

The children of Weltevrede Primary in the Riebeeck West valley are thrilled with their new school uniforms and their brand-new shiny school stationery packs, filled with colourful essentials. A great way to start the school year! Their teachers are so grateful to you, and so are we.
1. Carole and Douglas Aspinal, Reading, UK
2. Delise and Christopher Elgood, Cranbrook, Kent
3. John and Sue Stevenson, with Colin and Sally Cairns from St Michael’s Church, Tilehurst, Reading
4. Linda Dolan, Surrey
5. John and Katherine Corkish from the Mustard Seed Fairtrade shop in Garstang
We’ve had a makeover! Log on to www.breadlineafrica.org to enjoy our fresh new look – and to read our blog at www.breadlineafrica.org/blog.

If you’re still nervous about donating online, just click on our “donate” button, and it will take you through all the steps – it’s completely safe. Or drop us a line, and we’ll answer any questions.

Don’t forget, there are lots of ways to stay in touch electronically: you can get our latest “tweets”, by following @breadlineafrica…

Or you can go to www.facebook.com/breadlineafrica and “like” our page – we’d love to be your Facebook “Friends”…

And we’re on YouTube too: for videos that transport you right into our backyard, log on to www.youtube.com/user/breadlineafrica, and then click on the “subscribe” button…

And finally, for inspiring photos of what we do, take a look at www.flickr.com/photos/breadlineafrica.

Browse around our new website…

What’s ahead for 2012

We have exciting new plans not only for more early learning projects, but a new soup kitchen and toilet block, converted from our can-do containers. Watch the post for more news!

Alert: We’ve changed our postal addresses!

You might spot our new addresses on your envelopes – a speedier and safer way to get your responses to us. Remember that the “freepost” printed on our new envelopes means that we will pay for the postage – although if you put on a stamp, it helps keep down our costs.
Dear Friends

The start of a new year always has me reflecting on our achievements during the year gone by, and wondering how we are going to achieve our goals in the coming year. We owe our success stories to you, and I mean it when I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Your unusual and brave ways of fundraising never cease to amaze me! Read all about Steven D’Souza’s climb of Mount Kilimanjaro in this newsletter – what a thrill for us all. If you or any family members or friends are interested in doing something similar, please visit http://www.doitforcharity.com/ for more information. We’ve signed up as one of the registered charities. You can select an event and then create your own personalised fundraising page.

Last year was very special, as we joined hands with the Nelson Mandela Foundation in placing 13 container libraries in poor schools across South Africa, with more to come. And “Mandela Mondays” are now part of the Breadline Africa week – yet another way in which we honour the great man.

Because of your loyal support, our container project keeps rolling out brand-new classrooms, kitchens, libraries and toilets. This means that children have secure, safe places to learn, to get a square meal, and to practice good hygiene habits. Converting and installing the containers also offers jobs and an opportunity to get valuable skills to young people struggling to keep hope alive.

I must mention all our knitters – your colourful garments are truly treasured. We’re proud to give them to the needy children we see, and I wish you could see their teachers’ eyes as they gaze at your gorgeous hand-work.

I’d also like to thank you for your beautiful personal Christmas cards and letters. They mean so much to me and the team. And that reminds me, are you on my birthday calendar? Do let me know when you will be celebrating your birthday or wedding anniversary – I’d love to send you a special card. If you are on email, write to me at edna@breadlineafrica.org.za – or send me a letter.

Very special words of thanks to those of you who have let us know that you have remembered Breadline Africa in your Will. This is a delicate subject, and I do admire your decision. I would like you to know how much we value your beautiful and generous gesture, and to assure you that we will put your gift to good use. If you have any specific requests or ideas about how you would like us to use your gift, please let us know.

Much love,

Edna’s column

PS: Don’t forget that if you ever come to Cape Town, we’d love to meet you. Please do pop into our office for a cup of tea.

PPS: As always, I am looking for donations for my container piggy-bank – there is such a crying need for nursery-schools, toilets and soup kitchens in our poorest areas, and our wonderful containers are a quick, solid and secure solution to the problem. I’d be so grateful for any gifts that will help us to keep on rolling these out!

Gift Aid reminder – how you can help even more

£1 = £1.25 at no extra cost to you! If you’re a UK income taxpayer, please don’t forget to fill in and sign your Gift Aid Declaration, which allows us to claim 25% back on the donations you have already given us. This means 25% more communities can benefit at no extra cost to you!

Helping people help themselves

Breadline Africa United Kingdom Advisory Committee
Tony Smyth (Chairperson), Lord Clifford of Chudleigh, Sir Robert Dunbar, Ben Elwes, Tony Goodfellow, Frances Greathread, Peter Hickman, Louise Seligman, Pippa Smyth, David Warren
UK Charity No. 1075525 - GAVE Reg No. 000185302 - Company No. 3524187

Breadline Africa International Board
Louise Seligman (Chairperson), Sam Brantsma, Alex Chisholm, Sir Robert Dunbar, Ben Elwes, Renee Hopster, Ntshimi Mohlakoana, Pippa Smyth, Tony Smyth, Nao Wallis, David Warren, Hugh Winter

Visit our website at www.breadlineafrica.org

NS15/NL/UK