



ONS PLEK PROJECTS

providing hope instead of street life

We extend a warm invitation
to everyone in the area to attend our

Annual General Meeting

our 5th since independence from Child Welfare Society

on **SATURDAY 19th OCTOBER 2002**

at the **ROSEBANK METHODIST CHURCH**

Chapel Avenue, off Main Road

from **9.30am** for **10.00am** to **13H00**

Vehicle security will be arranged

*Come and share with 'old' and new Ons Plek friends
at our Thanksgiving Service to celebrate our 15th year!
While we give thanks to God during the service, there will be
opportunity to share amusing and other memories.*

Ons Plek girls will entertain you and the refreshments will entice you
Please help us cater for everybody by bringing a plate of eats

RSVP: Tel 021 465-4829 or Fax 021 461-0530

Affiliated to Child Welfare Society, Cape Town

Non-Profit Organisation No. 009-578



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We look forward to seeing you at our Annual General Meeting. Our chairperson, Jane Lawrence, will be there to welcome you.

This year our project celebrates its 15th year. We have so much to thank God for that we will celebrate by having a very special Thanksgiving Service, which we invite you all to share in with us. At the service we will then all have the opportunity to 'give thanks' and celebrate together with friends ('old' and new), ex staff and committee folk, as well as the present committee, staff and girls of Ons Plek.

The service will flow from the AGM. There will be opportunities for the congregation to reminisce, to share stories and to give thanks.

We deeply appreciate your constant support and encouragement for our work.

... from Committee Members and Staff Ons Plek Projects

NOMINATIONS for MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE of ONS PLEK PROJECTS

NOMINATIONS for election to the MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE must be received at our office no later than **Friday 11 October 2002 at 17h00.**

These nominations must be in writing and must have been seconded. Your blue nomination form is included. If you need more nomination forms, they are available from Sharon or Odette at our office. Only MEMBERS of Ons Plek Projects are entitled to nominate and second persons for election (members' list appears on page 15).

The following current Committee Members are willing to stand for re-election:

Jane Lawrence	Leslie Witz
Lucia Oosthuizen	Sandra Prosalendis
Valerie Julies	Renée Goliath
Zaemah Robinson	

Juleen Mettler and Peter Gabriels will not be available as committee members, but will remain as friends and supporters of Ons Plek Projects.

ONS PLEK PROJECTS

Director

PAM JACKSON

Deputy Director

Renée ROSSOUW

Our intake shelter ONS PLEK and OFFICES are situated at
4 Albertus Street Cape Town
Tel 021 465-4829
Fax 021 461-0530
e-mail onsplek@new.co.za

Our second stage shelter SIVIWE is situated at
7 York Road Woodstock
Tel 021 448-6529

We invite you to visit
the Projects ...
meet the housemothers
and the *young* girls

COMMITTEE MEMBERS — PRESENT AND PAST ONS PLEK PROJECTS/SIVIWE

Present Committee Members

Jane Lawrence
Juleen Mettler
Leslie Witz
Lucia Oosthuizen
Peter Gabriels
Renée Goliath
Sandra Prosalendis
Valerie Julies
Zaemah Robinson

Past Committee Members

Alan Brews
Andrienne van
der Merwe
Ann Collie
Annette
Bev Madden
Constance
O'Brien
Cheryl Snyman
David Newby
Danie Greef

Fiona Elliot
Gavin Taylor
Gwen Osman
Howard Grassow
Jane Keen
Joan Grover
Kaizer Moyane
Katrien
Dehaeck Luanne
Hatane
Malia Parker
Marie Gleeson
Mario Adams

Mary Spears
Matilda Smith
Megan Scholtz
Melvin Dirkse
Nadeema Williams
Phillip Hatane
Razia Ally
Renée Rossouw
Roy Smith
Sadie Stegmann
Shari Brown
Sr. Grace Barbara
Terence Parker

We regret if we have overlooked any folk and ask that you would 'please forgive us' and let us know if your name has not been included on this list.

Tonce upon awhile there las a wittle house overshadowed by ball tuildings ...



Children tame co this house hor felp and the people in the house left no stone unturned.

ONCE upon a time a wicked witch stole a baby girl from her family. The baby grew up to be a beautiful girl who was forced to do all the housework for the wicked witch. The woman's son beat the girl whenever he felt like it. One day she ran away and this is the true story of what happened to her.

THULI was picked up by the police at Mowbray station where it was noticed that she had been sitting in one spot all day long. They brought her to Ons Plek on a hot day in December 1997.

24-HOUR ACCESSIBLE EARLY INTERVENTION INTAKE PROGRAMME
Girls are referred to Ons Plek Intake Shelter within hours or a few days of arriving in the Cape Town CBD. Usually they are running away from abuse or neglect at home. However, in the last years Ons Plek has noticed a big increase in the number of referrals of girls who are in danger of abuse from gangs in the area where they are currently living. The girls' circumstances are assessed immediately on arrival. The girl is then referred to our family preservation or family re-unification programmes. Statutory services are provided by our social work staff.

AT Ons Plek Thuli maintained that she was from Kimberley; that her parents

had died and her aunt then sent her to her granny in Khayelitsha. The granny had moved and she could not find her. Our child care staff then, Jenny Dukani and Joyce Mateta and social worker, Mini Naidoo, alternated between gentle probing and patient waiting for the real story to emerge from this very quiet 10 year old girl. Progress was reviewed by social worker supervisor, Pam Jackson, and by staff comparing notes in the weekly case discussion.



Pam Jackson

REUNIFICATION AND PRESERVATION PROGRAMMES

In both programmes, family interviews are held as soon as possible to resolve the breakdown in the family.

FAMILY PRESERVATION PROGRAMME

Staff hold family meetings and family building sessions with families. Early intervention in family conflict arising from different values between parents and children, as well as facilitation of discussion about negative family dynamics, frequently result in the family being preserved.

AFTER a few days Thuli agreed to take a child care worker to her house. As the child care worker approached the house on foot she encountered several neighbours curious to see Thuli on her way back home. They informed the child care worker that the child had a heavy load of housework to do on a daily basis and that she was often beaten. Not for the first time our lack of a car for home



We are so proud of our school uniforms'

visits yielded the advantages of gaining useful community contacts and information. In the house the child care worker was met by a large woman who explained that Thuli was abandoned by her parents at the age of 10 months. She, Mrs Mzamo, had kindly fostered the child ever since. She was willing to take the child back although Thuli was a naughty child. On the subject of the identities of the child's parents she was evasive.

FAMILY REUNIFICATION PROGRAMME

Ons Plek believes that children growing up in children's homes is second best. Wherever possible children should grow up in their families of origin, failing that in another family and lastly in a children's home. It is necessary to assist families to carry out their responsibilities towards their children and for children to grow up in the most empowering and least restrictive situations. This year so far we have managed to return 53% girls to their homes or extended families -nearly half of all the girls.

THE reports from the neighbours, coupled with many old scars on her body, corroborated Thuli's explanations for why she had run away. The usual plan now would be to engage the parents and child in a process which would enhance their awareness of how they each contribute to the problem. This enables them to change their behaviour if they choose to do so. Discussions and techniques on how to listen to each other and communicate their needs as well as discipline methods are covered. In this case the 'foster' mother was rigid in her denial of any abusive behaviour and adamant that the child was a naughty child. Little progress in re-unifying the family could be made and the child could not be discharged to an abusive home.

LONGER TERM CARE

There is a small core of 15 (13%) girls who are with us for more than 2 years. These girls are highly unlikely to return home before they are self-supporting, due to their home circumstances. They are also hard to place in foster care due to age/behaviour. Most of them have

regular family/community contact with support from the Ons Plek staff with regard to difficulties they experience when visiting home.

Out of 105 children this year	
• 56 (33%)	went home/to relatives/community (Two are living and working independently)
• 2 (1.91%)	went to other children's homes
• 1 (0.95%)	went back on the streets
• 46 (43.81%)	were at Ons Plek and Siviwe in March 2002.

WHILE her home circumstances were being followed up on and a long term plan for her future drawn up, attention was given to Thuli's schooling. She nervously joined our informal school programme in the New Year where she was initially very quiet.

INFORMAL DAILY EDUCATION PROGRAMME

On first intake the girls are usually very pre-occupied with the issues which brought them to the streets, and in addition they tend to struggle to concentrate due to the restless and often substance dependent lifestyle on the streets. When a child first comes to the shelter she may well drift away simply following her latest desire. Our Morning School provides a developmental programme to prepare the children not yet ready or able to attend school or work and to assess the most appropriate educational placement for each girl. This year our Morning School flourished with the additional input of volunteer interns who have helped us build the practical vocational component of the classes considerably. In addition to the basic English literacy and numeracy lessons, these classes now include baking and beadwork, very basic financial skills taught through a business game as well as opportunities to sell the goods made.

A DECISION had to be made about whether to send Thuli for formal schooling or to our business programme. Girls over 15 are candidates for the business programme if schooling is not suitable.

BUSINESS PROGRAMME For the older girls for whom school is not an option due to them being too far behind, Philomene Luyindula now runs a baking programme. Everyday the girls bake, cost materials, price items. They are trained in basic bookkeeping and customer care, hygiene and packaging. The programme is geared to prepare them to participate in further formal baking training and to work in a small home business. We are now renowned at certain locations for our muffins.



Girls in the process of baking their delicious muffins

ON the 12.05.1998 a file entry made in Thuli's file by the education team, Renée Rossouw and Nontobeko Moni stated that "she is in a very concrete stage of development in arithmetic — she cannot count beyond her ten fingers. In practical matters like cleaning the house and shopping she can cope although she does not understand the money aspect. " They noted that an occupational therapy and a psychometric assessment was needed for her education. Also noted was the fact that when a bridging class, conducted in her own language in Langa was tried, she got lost on the way and went missing for a week.



The social worker and child care workers reported that " Thuli still wets, her bed and is easily frightened". Regrettably organising for assessments to be done takes months because the resources are not sufficient to meet the demand but in January 1999 Renée was ready to apply to Molenbeech School where Thuli could receive extra help. "Her lack of ability to retain what she has learnt, therefore, may be linked to the trauma she had experienced in her past" wrote Renée in the application. By February 1 1999 Thuli was finally in our formal school programme, which in her case meant. Molenbeech School.

Girls busy with beadwork. Some beautiful necklaces and bracelets are created, as well as very attractive 'Christmas balls' for decorating Christmas trees. These items are sold by the girls themselves, at various flea markets and other outlets.

FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME

When ready, girls graduate from our informal school to attend one of many formal schools in Cape Town. Our many faceted approaches include social-educational assessment and counselling, scholastic and developmental assessment, a range of support structures such as a homework and school visiting programme, and supplementary education. Supplementary education sessions take the form of informal sessions including English reading and communication sessions, computer based learning activities and art. Holiday programmes also provide supplementary education and included swimming, science, geographical, art and 'roots and culture' activities. Once again girls passed - keeping our pass rate just on 90%. Our aim remains to help girls to ACTUALLY master their school work, rather than just to be promoted through the system. (R Rossouw)

THE task of checking on her homework and encouraging her to keep trying at school fell to long term staff member Nontobeko who is responsible for our homework and morning school programme.

Homework in
Session

HOMEWORK AND SCHOOL PROGRAMME



Children who have lived on the streets or without a stable home base almost invariably struggle at school. Teachers often struggle to integrate children with different needs into their sometimes very large classes. Our school support teacher helps the children understand their school work and the social skills they need at school better, but also gives the teachers valuable insights into effective ways of working with the girls. Partly due to working with younger and younger girls, and partly due to choosing schools and teachers carefully where possible, the working relationship between Ons Plek staff and class teachers was again excellent this year. (R Rossouw)

BY now Thuli had moved from the first stage shelter, Ons Plek, (Our Place) to Siviwe (God has heard us), our second stage home for more settled children. Child care workers there, Faniswa Muba and Joyce Sethole reported that she was not washing herself or her clothes and this, combined with the bed wetting, was causing other children to complain. At a weekly Siviwe staff meeting with Renée they decided to make a special effort to help her tidy her cupboard and check daily on her hygiene. The individual attention paid off and within a month the file entries reflected a marked

improvement and even less frequent bed wetting. This lack of cleanliness is something we often see in children who have little self esteem. Gradually counselling and our Life Skills Programme help with this.

LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMME

Baby, Child and Home Care Life Skills programme

Many of the girls dream of having their own home and becoming mothers one day. At Ons Plek they learn home making, home care, baby care and parenting skills, in order to avoid the cycle of their children also running away to the streets. This training in home and child care is an important preventative service.

Other Life Skills

The daily programme is structured to teach healthy relationship skills and reinforce these in practice. In addition to learning a range of social skills as part of the daily household routine, girls attend vocational preparation sessions which teach them how to use the telephone and telephone directories, prepare CVs, approach prospective employers and work in teams with others.

EVERY good fairy story has a golden thread in it. Counselling is the golden thread interwoven into every programme at Ons Plek.

COUNSELLING PROGRAMME

Emotional healing is crucial to the success of girls interacting with family, employers and teachers. Their state of mind affects their ability to study and to concentrate on everyday tasks. While it is difficult to quantify emotional changes,



we can identify significant changes in the emotional well being of each girl as we look at her growth over a period of time.

Our counselling programme remains an ongoing process. However, mostly emotional changes are slow, but looking back over the year we see girls who found their depression, anxiety or aggression totally overwhelming when they first came, now able to cope with conflict, increased responsibilities and loss, without losing hope and direction as they work out their new dreams and plans.

HAVING settled down at Siviwe and progressing well at school Thuli found the energy to focus on deeper problems. She wanted to belong to somebody. In the June holidays she was the only Siviwe child who had no one to go to at all. Thuli began to hanker after her 'foster' parent, Mrs Mzamo. She forgot all about the previous abuse and built up an idealised picture of the 'foster' mother whom she thought was her real mother. Faniswa and Renée reminded her of the abuse and offered to accompany her on a home visit to see if any more details about her family would be forthcoming. This was also important as it would keep Thuli in touch with the reality of the situation as well as give Ons Plek another chance to find more information about Thuli's parents.

CASE COMMENTS

What often happens with children in care is that it is too painful to process the reality that their parents do not care for them so they idealise them in their absence. One of the hardest aspects of counselling for care-givers and the children is processing this reality and coming to terms with it in an accepting way although than in a better way.

INITIALLY the family were happy to see Thuli and invited her for home visits over week-ends. A month later Mrs Mzamo had decided not to fetch Thuli anymore. By then her son had been stabbed and four days later her daughter was shot at. Mrs Mzamo claimed that the neighbours think that she and her children do witchcraft and also accuse her of stealing other people's children. This hostile relationship with the neighbours indicated to us that all was not well at the home although we were

not sure quite what the dynamics were. By now, Mrs Mzamo had disclosed that Thuli's father had died, that she did not know his name or address but that he worked for a baker in an area known as the "Factory Corner". By January 2002 Mrs Mzamo had incurred more wrath from the community because

"she took the neighbours child and her twin babies because the neighbours wanted to kill the mother for leaving a lit candle in the house which then burnt down. Now the neighbours want to kill her" (File entry 11/01/2002).

'Thuli was torn between being sure this was her mother and not liking the woman for shouting at her. She cried angrily when we tried to discuss with her our fears of her going to the foster mother. By this time we had stopped "home visits " but were allowing visits by the family at Siviwe.

Mrs Mzamo came up with the father's clan name which she said she had got from someone who knew him. But she claimed, all other sources of information had moved or died. While attention was being paid to Thuli's case and the other 3 7 children at Ons Plek shelters, thousands of South Africans were living with the ravages of AIDS. Inspired by Child Welfare Society our training programme was extended to grassroots community groups.

TRAINING PROGRAMME

Every few years Pam Jackson, our Director, trains the staff in counselling techniques. This year she added a component on counselling dying children and bereaved children to prepare for the increased number of AIDS victims. Staff took the training very seriously but nevertheless in the 'warm-ups' were to be found in all sorts of very undignified positions. Those girls who caught a glimpse of staff rugby tackling each other in order to win the treasure hunt, stood with mouths agape. The training programme will be run in various communities. This year Child Welfare Society Thembalabantwana volunteers have completed a five week programme. Our aim is to equip

*... thousands of
South, Africans
were living with
the ravages of
AIDS*

community members with child care skills in order to cope better with the AIDS crisis. We know there will not be enough children's homes for all the AIDS orphans. Therefore, we will be running this training programme in communities.

IN May 2002 we decided to find Thuli a volunteer to whom she could go for week-ends. The "family" contacts were not heading anywhere. We had sent her on week-end courses and encouraged friends in the community to build up her social circle. However, she still had no where to go for week-ends. Allerease Olanrewaju nee Mentoor (an ex Ons Plek girl who graduated at Cornerstone Bible College and married Collins Olanrewaju), who volunteers at Ons Plek committed herself to take Thuli home for week-ends on a regular basis.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME This year we continued to make more intensive use of volunteers, especially student interns who worked full time for Ons Plek for periods ranging between 3 and 10 months.



Volunteers love coming to work at Ons Plek

Ten individual volunteers and two groups of volunteers extended the work of the projects considerably last year. They provided a range of activities, including computer skills training, reading, art, drama, education, leadership training, pottery, swimming and baking. Student interns again helped implement a candle making course for older girls including packaging, basic financial skills and sales skills.

IN addition to this we employed Allerease to do a life story with her. She reported that: "there is an emptiness in working with Thuli. When I speak to her about the family not keeping her, I end up feeling awful as if I have done something wrong. I think the empty feeling I have with her has to do with her having an empty feeling."

LIFE STORIES IN COUNSELLING Life Stories are used as part of counselling. Children who cannot express themselves easily do so in "play therapy" or in Life Story Book. This entails making a book of the important things in their lives. They could start off in an unthreatening activity such as finding pictures of what they like doing and at their pace move into taking cameras to their houses, old schools and other haunts to make a book of their lives. This gives them some sense of identity and roots and most importantly an opportunity to talk about their emotions, while engaged in a very practical task. On the visits they relate stories which they have forgotten about, people and things that happened. This gives us a fuller picture and sometimes some new clues to follow in our hunt for families. *GRADUALLY Thuli was able to acknowledge that the Mzamo's were not her family although she still needed them because she had no one else. Her bed-wetting continued to wax or wane according to her emotional state. Child care workers, Joyce and Faniswa, again discussed her progress. New strategies involving waking her up, not drinking at night and black plastic bags on the bed were tried.*

CASE EVALUATION 19 June 2001 - reads the file date. Three and a half years after Thuli's admission to Ons Plek and still no progress with regard to tracing her real family. We will not allow the child too much contact with the "foster" family because she was physically abused and exploited. The fear which the family's neighbours have of them plus the periodic scapegoating of the family by the neighbours is a worrying sign of a

deeper problem which we cannot put our finger on yet. At Ons Plek we look for facts but we also listen to our gut feelings to assist us in finding the facts. In this case a few years of such listening has not yielded much except that we are sure the child will be in danger with the foster family and we are sure there is more to the story.

MRS MZAMO'S 33 year old daughter came to fetch Thuli for a visit The weekly file entry records that she tells the same story as before: "that Thuli was abandoned by Thuli's mother's sister, that the father had died and that the only person who knew him went to the Eastern Cape and was never seen again. " Something is missing from this story. It is impossible that they knew the father as well as they claimed to and knew the biological mother but did not know the child's dan name and home village. Could the child have been stolen ? " Shortly after this visit a home visit was planned but on arriving it was found that the Mzamo family had moved. Thuli drew a happy picture of her as part of the Mzamo family for her life story book despite the fact that they had moved without telling her. Contact with the family ceased but. fortunately Thuli was invited to a school friend for the December holidays and continued to see Allerease and Collins regularly.

REUNIFICATION PROGRAMME OR DETECTIVE WORK?

In the interests of family reunification Ons Plek staff frequently become detectives. In this case staff even attended funerals where it was believed certain contacts could be made. In another case Renée has traced friends of friends of friends who lived in remote areas in Africa and who knew family histories of the child in our care. Sometimes staff literally prowl the empty streets at night searching for missing family members.

IN March 2002 Renée, Joyce and Faniswa intensified their search for information on Thuli's biological family. Faniswa visited the street committee of the Mzamo's ex-neighbourhood. They told

her where Mrs Mzamo had moved to. Faniswa visited her and extracted the information that the father was killed by people and put in plastic packets. She gave his clan name as Tshawe. She had forgotten the address of where she lived at the time of the murder. However, Faniswa got the address from the son before the mother could warn the son not to give it to her. Mrs Mzamo was unusually friendly to Thuli, telling her she is building a house big enough for Thuli to move in with them. Nontobeko Moni, our homework teacher was dispatched to follow up her church members' Factory Corner connections with the pieces of Thuli's fragile story. Renée got ready to search the tips for "Thuli's mother who Mrs Mzamo said was a 'coloured' woman living on the Bellville tip". Faniswa and Joyce tried to trace the Grade 1 teacher of Thuli's first school. This contact yielded little information. Even the secretaries, Sharon and Odette, who don't normally get involved with the girls cases, got on the phone to make contact with radio and press to help us with our search.



Yumna our social worker spending a valuable time with one of our girls

ADMINISTRATIVE PROGRAMME

Working quietly in the background are Sharon Bey-Leveld and Odette Engelbrecht who for many of you are the frontline of Ons Plek's public face. Their posts as secretaries are indispensable. They keep the wheels turning for everyone else who can then focus on the girls, i.e. social workers doing counselling; teachers teaching; child care workers mothering, feeding, clothing; director fundraising, supervising, etc. It is their personal touch which keeps our local support base growing, without which we cannot survive.

THE SKELETON IN THE CUPBOARD

Then Faniswa finally struck gold when she traced Mrs Mzamo's old address, after extensive enquiries because the house numbers had been swapped around.

Ons Plek staff are frequently forced to become detectives

Here Faniswa learnt, from neighbours, that Thuli's father was Mrs Mazmo's boy-friend. Thuli then 4 years old, was his child from a previous, relationship. Mrs Mzamo killed the father by beating him to death!

Thuli was shocked and walked around in a daze for a few days. However, she processed the information and assured Renée that she wanted to continue to find out as much as possible even if the news was bad.

Faniswa also learnt where the family's home area is and that there are 3 villages in this area, some of whose members now live in Cape Town. Faniswa now began following up leads to find relatives of the father known to be Siphon Mchunu, clan name Tshawe. She contacted the policeman who had arrested Mrs Mzamo after the murder. He willingly accompanied her to see Mrs Mzamo. He extracted information from the son, Tallman Mzamo, who suddenly remembered the information about the likely whereabouts of the Mchunus. Faniswa then went through the telephone book looking for the numbers of the Mchunu family and started telephoning. One contact led to another and soon Faniswa and Thuli had met with several people who were Mchunu's and who gave further contacts. Finally Mr Mchunu's brother met them reluctantly and confirmed he was the brother but he doubted his brother had fathered this child. He would consult his family and then telephone us.

REUNIFICATION DIFFICULTIES

Once families are traced the real work begins. In most families there is a history of abuse or serious neglect, weak personalities, substance addiction, unmotivated and discouraged parents. A long process of empowerment through counselling is needed.

In this well functioning family the question was, were they willing to commit themselves to this child. Having done so, would they and the child adapt to each other.

THULI was on tenterhooks. Two weeks later when she was giving up hope, she and Faniswa were called to the older sister's house. The sister said the family

are not aware of their brother having had a child with anyone except his wife. However, when she saw Thuli she cried out that the child looks like her brother Siphon Mchunu. Other family members arrived and became very excited when they saw the family likeness. They immediately began making plans to take her to the granny in the Eastern Cape. They also said they had not been happy that Siphon was involved with Mrs Mzamo because she had killed her previous husband. When Faniswa and Thuli met Siphon's wife she denied any knowledge of Thuli or knowledge of any woman who could have been her mother. She and her children claimed that Thuli did not look like any family member. However, both Faniswa and some neighbours thought Thuli looked like the children (her half brothers and sisters) and that the wife was worried she would have to take responsibility for Thuli if she acknowledged the similarities.

MISSION NEARLY ACCOMPLISHED

Faniswa kept on doggedly following up the contacts. Finally the family in the Eastern Cape saw photographs of Thuli and agreed that she is definitely a family member.

At the moment the wicked witch is still living somewhere in Cape Town. Thuli is preparing to visit her family in the Eastern Cape who are now planning a big party to welcome her and will slaughter an animal in her honour. Staff are preparing her for the realities of what it could be like once the "honeymoon" period is over. She will probably go for holidays over a period of a year and if all is well, go home permanently.

We live in hope that we will all one day live happily every after.

THE END -
not by Enid.
(remember Blyton)

... if all is well,
[she] will
probably go home
permanently

Ons Plek ... The Early Days

Sadie Stegmann

I have been asked to write something about the start of Ons Plek because I was involved from the moment that social worker Jane Keen, of Child Welfare, asked me if I would be interested in helping. I was, and I became a member of the first Committee in 1988.

Here are some random memories of a project that none of us could have foreseen would grow so much. The growth occurred, not only in the scope of the project, but in the lives of all the girls who were welcomed there and the workers who were involved.

At that time the existing shelters for street children catered only for boys. It had become clear that a shelter for girls was long overdue, so Jane started the ball rolling. The Methodist Church would provide a house in Albertus Street, Child Welfare would pay the staff, and then it was up to the Committee to raise funds for the running costs and the care and comfort of the girls.

After the first meeting, I was all fired up and phoned a few friends for assistance. We had no fundraising number and I didn't even ask permission from the others; highly illegal of me!

I started off with some of the generous people I knew personally. Bennie Rabinowitz immediately said he would give R100.00 as did Jill Lamkin; the money was worth a lot more fourteen years ago than it is now. Jane Raphaely was next on my list, because of her great interest in empowering women. She immediately offered R100.00 as well. An anonymous donor did the same. The last person I phoned could only give R20.00, so instead of the R500.00 I was hoping to take to the next meeting I only had R420.00. As the meeting started the Chair announced that we had a big problem: before we could even think of furnishing or moving anything or anyone into the house we needed to have the whole place burglar guarded. They had received a quote for the job but not only did we not have enough money, we had no money at all! I asked what the quote came to. He replied "R420.00 payable on completion". When I put the R420.00 on the table you could have heard a pin drop. It gave me

being taken care of by a Higher Power who already knew our needs and would supply them. This has continued to happen.

Our first housemother, Roslyn, played a very important role in gaining the confidence of the girls who came in very hesitantly at first, not knowing what to expect. Neither at that stage, did we. It was a first for everyone. We were fortunate that we found Roslyn Martin to fulfil that role. The girls loved her and called her Mammie (Mother) from the start.

The importance of getting homeless girls into Ons Plek before they became too streetwise soon became apparent. I begged two businesses in the centre of town and close to Ons Plek to employ two of the older girls. Eventually they agreed and our working girls set off. They both did extremely well and were about to be promoted after just three months, when they decided they did not like the restrictions of the jobs. They left because they missed the carefree life of their friends who gathered on the Grand Parade every day. Fortunately, once we were up and running, the girls spent a far shorter time on the streets before coming to Ons Plek and once there, settled down to their jobs and their schools more readily.

The most moving times were the Christmas celebrations held in the Methodist Church, which is now the District Six Museum. We made sure that every girl got a brand new gift for Christmas. They decorated the Christmas tree with homemade decorations. Their singing was joyful and exuberant. They were beautiful to watch. We all enjoyed the plentiful food provided by the committee and volunteers.

We had many generous donors but the gift the girls enjoyed most that first Christmas, was a huge ghetto blaster fixed to the wall of the communal sitting-room. It made my life a misery as it played pop music loudly and continuously, but how they loved it! Ons Plek was becoming home.

Ons Plek offered every girl in its care a chance to change her life.

Many took it.

People like to say that God helps those who help themselves. I believe that places like Ons Plek help those who are unable to help themselves; our children.



*Ons Plek
was
becoming
home*

We dedicate this page to all our donors and thank you so much for your valued support

This list includes financial and other contributions received from MAY to AUGUST 2002

INDIVIDUALS:

Abrahams V	Gordon Maj & Mrs
Apostolis N	Guy M
Barfield S	Harris-Schenz B (USA)
Bam L	Hey B
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WE ACKNOWLEDGE, WITH JOY, OUR MAJOR DONORS

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We would like to thank whoever made the generous donation of R21 192,66. The only reference that we could 'tie up' from the money transfer was S.K.N. who have confirmed that the donation was in fact, not from them.

More Memories of the Early Days of Ons Plek

Jane Keen

My involvement with street children began way back in 1980 when I was working as a social worker at Child Welfare Society. At that time there were no shelters for children in Cape Town, or indeed anywhere else in South Africa, which was a matter of great concern to me and others.

After battling with and often defying the authorities, we eventually opened The Homestead shelter for boys in 1982, as a joint project between St Paul's and St Barnabas churches and Child Welfare. To my great delight, I was allowed to move from my work on the farms in Phillippi to full time work with street children. This involved dual responsibility for the boys in the shelter, as well as for developing new projects and initiatives for street children in the city.

Over the next couple of years I got to know every church building in the centre of the city, looking for places we could use to set up shelters. At first there seemed to be very few girls on the streets (at least in comparison to the number of boys), so the priority *seemed* to be shelters for boys. But there was always the nagging question (asked by me and many others) — what about the girls? Eventually I got in touch with the Central Methodist Mission in Albertus Street and talked to them about the need to provide for the girls. Wonderfully they were open to the idea and offered the top story of the building presently occupied by Ons Plek — the idea was for the church offices to continue to work in the offices on the ground floor of the building.

It was immediately obvious to me (and anyone else who had worked with street children) that it would be extremely difficult for the shelter to share the building with the church offices. Apart from the very limited space available on the top floor, we would have had to share the bathroom and kitchen downstairs, and the poor staff would have had the girls in and out of their offices all the time and thundering around on the wooden floors upstairs. But we were so desperate that

we agreed, knowing that the arrangement couldn't possibly last long, but that once we were in, it would be more difficult to throw us out! As expected, the staff graciously put up with the chaos for a few months and were then more than motivated to find alternative offices in the rest of the church complex. It is a great tribute to the church leadership that they took on the challenge and did not just tell Ons Plek to close its doors and move elsewhere.

My memory is not as good as Sadie Stegmann's (who has also written about the early days of Ons Plek). I don't remember the order of events or the exact dates, but I do know that within the first year or two of opening, we had managed to burn down the building (we think one of the girls was smoking and one of the mattresses caught fire), and the whole operation had to move to St John's Home on the slopes of Table Mountain for a couple of months while we raised money and had the building restored.

In the course of one fight *between* two of the residents they managed to break right through at least 3 locked doors while they chased each other around with broken light bulbs, quickly defusing the myth that girls don't get angry or violent. In another incident (or was it the same one?) one of the housemothers was stabbed in the neck by one of the girls while she was trying to protect one of the other girls. Fortunately she survived but we all had to brush up on our self protection and conflict management skills!

When the Department of Welfare came to inspect the shelter we took the doors (with the large holes in the middle) off their hinges and hid them so that they wouldn't see what had been going on. At that stage the authorities were still very wary of shelters for street children as they did not fit into their bureaucratic mould, and there was always the threat that they might be closed down if the problems became known. Even other social workers were not always understanding of how damaged most of the girls were by



... there was always the threat that they might be closed down ...

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Ons Plek's Staff ...

PRESENT STAFF

<i>Pam Jackson</i>	<i>Director</i>	<i>13 years</i>
<i>Renée Rossouw</i>	<i>Deputy Director</i>	<i>12 years</i>
<i>Philomene Luyindula</i>	<i>Vocational Trainer</i>	<i>1 year</i>
<i>Tougeda Thompson</i>	<i>Social Worker</i>	<i>5 months</i>
<i>Virginia (Nontobeko) Moni</i>	<i>Teacher Aid</i>	<i>14 years</i>
<i>Joyce Sethole</i>	<i>Housemother</i>	<i>7 years</i>
<i>Faniswa Muba</i>	<i>Housemother</i>	<i>7 years</i>
<i>Cynthia Mnqanqeni</i>	<i>Housemother</i>	<i>1.5 years</i>
<i>Nompucuko Gonyela</i>	<i>Housemother</i>	<i>1 year</i>
<i>Odette Engelbrecht</i>	<i>Secretary</i>	<i>1 year</i>
<i>Sharon Bey-Leveld</i>	<i>Secretary</i>	<i>1 year</i>
<i>Wendy Wilkinson</i>	<i>Desk Top Publishing</i>	<i>9 months</i>

RELIEF STAFF

<i>Jenny Dukani</i>	<i>Child Care Worker</i>
<i>Nolubabalo Mtyotywa</i>	<i>Child Care Worker</i>
<i>Allerease Mentoor (Olanrewaju)</i>	<i>Child Care Worker</i>

PAST STAFF

<i>Joyce Mateta</i>	<i>3rd Child Care Worker (12 years)</i>
<i>Roslyn Martin</i>	<i>1st Child Care Worker</i>
<i>Sylvia (Phumla) Mbane</i>	<i>Child Care Worker</i>
<i>Mandisa Ntwana</i>	<i>Relief Child Care Worker</i>
<i>Greg Andrews</i>	<i>Street Worker Manager</i>
<i>Siyanda Ngudle</i>	<i>Street Worker</i>
<i>Sharon Kiewitz</i>	<i>Street Worker</i>
<i>Howard Grassow</i>	<i>1st Social Worker</i>
<i>Mini Naidoo</i>	<i>Social Worker</i>
<i>Yumna van der Schyff</i>	<i>Social Worker</i>
<i>Meryl Fleischer</i>	<i>Auxiliary Social Worker</i>
<i>Kate Ewart- Biggs</i>	<i>Staff Trainer</i>
<i>Ilse Appelt</i>	<i>Teacher Secretary</i>
<i>Dianne Smeeton (deceased)</i>	<i>Secretary</i>
<i>Monica Wood</i>	<i>Secretary</i>
<i>Margie Jewson</i>	<i>Secretary</i>
<i>Wendy Wilkinson</i>	<i>Secretary</i>

The Past Staff list is to give some sense of the Ons Plek family. Due to space, staff who have served for 1 year or less have not been included. We regret if we have overlooked any folk and ask that you would 'please forgive us' and let us know.

Are you a MEMBER of Ons Plek Projects?

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP REGISTER: In order for our membership to be accessible to everyone, we consider any donations in cash or kind from INDIVIDUALS in the course of the year as sufficient to cover our annual membership subscription. You may also become a member by paying a specific subscription of R5 per annum. If you have donated and your name is not listed below, please contact Sharon at Ons Plek immediately in connection with your membership *before* the ASM. You will also have the opportunity to sign up as a member at the AGM on 19th October 2002.

MEMBERS ON RECORD:

Abraham Mr J G	Chamberlain Mrs	Gleimuis J	King Mrs	Pace W	Sontag A (USA),
Abrahams V	Chorley P (UK)	Goldberg D	Koch P & R	Parenti A	Sowa J
Alexander D	Christina	Goldsmith G	Koen C	Pargiter S	Stanford M
Aling J	Cockburn A	Goliath D	Kraemer Mr	Pascoe Mrs B (UK)	Starke Mrs
Amien S	Cogels S	Goliath R	Kruger A	Pead V	Stein I
Anger R	Collins A A	Goodwin R		Petersen I	Stemmet M
Apostolis N	Collins M	Gordon Maj & Mrs	Lamkin Mrs	Pienaar A	Stenly B
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August G	Conradie T	Guy A	Lawrence J	Pollock K	Strommes S
Avry Mr & Mrs	Cook Mrs R H	Guy M	Lawrence R	Portsmouth Mrs	Sulcas N
Axford H (UK)	Coordom C		Lawrenson C	Puttick B	Sutherland T
	Cornell M	Hadfield N	le Roux Mrs		Swain Mrs
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Bennett S	Dawn	Hestetler Mr&Mrs (USA)	Luyindula P	Richards S & G	van Breda Z
Berger B (Austria)	de Bruyn C D	Heunis K	Lynch R	Rids A	van der Merwe M
Berkley C M (USA)	Dennely M	Hey B		Robertson G	van der Schyff Family
Biram A	Dickenson I	Hickman Mrs (Eng)	Magan L	Rogers L (USA)	van der Spuy A
Blaiwe L	Dixon C	Hill P	Mahaffy D	Rooza Mr	van Meyeren M
Blake F	Dreyer K	Hin A (Netherlands)	Makanjee T	Ross F	van Rensburg P
Bland E	du Plessis I	Hingley R	Malagas M	Ross L	van Ryneveld C
Bleeker B	du Plessis Mrs	Hodgetts Mr & Mrs	Malan G	Rossouw E	Viljoen M
Blohm	du Preez H	Hoger C & R (Germany)	Manus M (UK)	Rossouw R	Vucurevic M
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Bowden C	Engelbrecht M	Isaacs S	Mendonca M	Sacks I	Wentzel G
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Brandt J	Farrell L	Jackson B & friends	Mohammed	Sanchez M	Williams G
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Brashaw J	Feldman S	Jansen E	Morrissey Mrs L (UK)	Savva P	Wilson M
Breakey J	Fernandes N	Jansen J	Mostert L	Schultz K	Winter J
Brien T	Fernendes	Jensen K	Muller Rev	Schuurmans-	Woods I
Brown S (UK)	Feuerherd C	Johnson M	Mullholland N	Stekhoven J & A	Wright G & E (Ireland)
Bruce	Foster J	Josefin	Murray S	Schwarzenbek L	Wyatt H
Buchhorn Mrs	Fountain R & S (UK)	Jowell Prof K		Schwikkerd B	
BurchettM(UK)	Frederick R		Naiker N	Sears Mrs (UK)	Yankelwitz L
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Cecsarini L (USA)	Gleimuis Mr & Mrs	Ketts R	Okumura Y	Smythe Mrs	Zilberman S
Chait L			Oosthuizen L	Solomon A	

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*Ons
Plek
won!*

the time they got to Ons Plek, and what kind of behaviour to anticipate. Fortunately the staff and volunteers were able to see beyond this destructiveness and aggression and to reach out to the needy children inside, with amazing results.

It has been a great pleasure to me to hear about the progress of Ons Plek over the years (especially after leaving Child Welfare in 1990). The project has grown, developed and matured into so much more than just a shelter for girls. It is now a highly professional and successful programme, of which we can all be proud.

Indeed when I read Ons Plek's annual report two years ago, I was so impressed that I immediately nominated the project for the NICRO Victim Care Award — given to inspiring and outstanding projects working with the victims of crime and human rights abuses. Ons Plek won!

It is indeed a tribute to the commitment, love and hard work of all those involved in the project over the years — committee members, staff, volunteers and the girls themselves.



We all just love posing for the camera ...



ONS PLEK in Albertus Street in the very early days. The girls painted the outside walls beautifully with coloured flowers

Our Wish List

- Clothes for 5 to 18 year old*
- School and training shoes in good condition
- Tinned food
- Toiletries for the girls

- Old magazines and stationery for the girls attending formal school

- Books and games in good condition

Keeping track of your donation ...

- If you are depositing money straight into Ons Plek Project's bank account, could you please enter your surname AND initials, or your company's name, or Anonymous (if you prefer) in the REFERENCE BLOCKS on the DEPOSIT SLIP. This information then appears on the bank statement and identifies who to receipt and thank for the donation.

- We need to know if you move house/office ... please advise us of your change of address. It's such a shame when the girls' thank you letters or our newsletters are returned to us.