Willows project aids vulnerable children

Willows Regeneration of Children of Abuse is a project being started by Nelisa Ndlovu, a candidate in the RCIA in Howick. Nelisa is currently the social worker at Khazimula Children’s Project in Lidgetton. She has experience working with outreach groups in the Midlands (religious and business) and in running camps and days of environmental trips for boys and girls who have been victims of rape and/or extreme poverty and abuse. She hopes to obtain NPO (Non-Profit Organization) status for Willows so that she and her team can do more to combat child abuse in our area.

St Joseph Preschool donates sandwiches, fruit, chips and sweets to a similar project, Superbugs, where Nelisa works once a month in Mpopomeni township. In sad times when children at St. Joseph’s have experienced sexual abuse, Nelisa has counselled the parent and child involved and organized ongoing counseling. She has also talked to all of the preschoolers about the sacredness of their bodies.

This project is made possible through an IHM Ministry Grant. I would like to say a word of appreciation for the support of the grant. The camps enable the children to connect with nature; they are developing self-confidence and have a safe place with the gatherings. LONG LIVE IHM SISTERS! LONG LIVE!
The name "Willows" was chosen to signify the security that children can feel under a tree. Here are some pictures of children enjoying themselves at a Willows camp.

Nelisa Ndlovu, Howick

**IHM Partnership in Howick**

Willows is effective because Nelisa, as a Zulu partner, can communicate with children with serious problems who are not able to discuss them in English.

Here are some responses from the children:

“To join Sakhabantwana Camps made me feel good. I felt relaxed with my peers. I felt like I was on holiday by the beach overseas feeling happy, relaxing, not worrying about any problem.”

"Sister Nelisa, I am so very happy for your help. I love you with all my heart. I have many problems. To be part of this camp helped me to feel happy and I did not think about my problems."

The IHM Ministry Grant helped to move toward the goals by teaching children how to communicate and share their deepest issues toward solutions; by encouraging children to grow in trust of professional helpers and others; by exposing children to the beauty and nurture of the environment so near to their townships but so far from their experience; by offering play (camp challenges) to gain confidence; by including campers in cooking and other responsibilities toward self-worth; in short: by offering safe spaces for children to experience their value and worth without shame or blame in a happy, free, trust-building camp surrounded by nature with other children who have also been abused and with professional helpers.

Peg O'Shea, IHM

**Trauma-healing for street children**

Hope Home was started by two men who had themselves been street children in Khartoum and found a shelter run by a De La Salle Brother. Their compassion led them to offer the same opportunity to street children of Juba. Twenty boys now stay with a foster father and mother who see that they go to school and have their needs met.
While being trained as facilitator for Capacitar Trauma-Healing a few years ago, I heard that some of the boys woke at night screaming with terrible nightmares and flashbacks. I was determined to do what I could to enable those boys to experience a Trauma Healing workshop. The opportunity came the last weekend of September when two of us from Solidarity hosted 31 boys, ages 11-17 years, at our Good Shepherd Peace Center. Another group of 11 boys being sheltered at the former Comboni Novitiate joined them. We did not know what to expect. Surprisingly, they were most cooperative and participated fully in learning the exercises, even well enough to teach others.

The following weekend, we had another 31 boys, 24 from the Comboni Shelter, where they sleep within the walls of the compound to avoid abuse at night, were running to squeeze into the vehicle coming for the second Trauma-Healing workshop. Just sleeping in a bed and having three meals a day was a treat! But what the boys had heard was that “Everyone is respectful.” They were racing to come. A third group of seven street children came from Juba Town, in the neighborhood of Solidarity House. In total, we were able to offer 62 boys an opportunity to learn skills to help them heal and to manage emotions. We have been asked to do another workshop for those boys still waiting to come … another weekend is coming soon.

One more blessing was that at the end of the first session, two boys from Hope Home stayed behind because they wanted to say something. They brought a person who could translate their Arabic into English. One about 12 years old and the other about 16 said, “We want to thank you for what you gave us; we have learned a lot that will help us.” I thought of the Gospel story of the lepers and the one who came to thank Jesus. Such goodness brings hope!

Annette St-Amour, IHM
**Peg O’Shea’s three bags full**

Sister Peg O’Shea, IHM, 75, has three bags full. The “first bag” is her primary work as director of a preschool in the hall of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Howick, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. There, she coordinates the work of three other women who daily teach and feed disadvantaged children age 4-6. Their preschool curriculum is well developed and due to their excellent preparation, the children always find a place in the local “big schools.” Peg raises all the funds – locally and abroad, secures “not-so-dated” food from the local Woolworth’s grocery store, tends to the needs of the children as well as the teachers (themselves from disadvantaged backgrounds and with multiple health issues) and tries to involve as many volunteers in the work as possible.

Peg’s second ‘bag full’ is her work at Khazimula, a residential home for abused children, which she was instrumental in setting up to meet a growing need in the small town of Howick. It has been in operation for 11 years already, utilizing the site of a previous “farm school,” with an Anglican priest as resident “head of house.” Khazimula receives some funding from the Department of Social Development, although recently its funding has been cut, and the number of residents reduced from 30 to 20 in a not-untypical South African government attempt to “cut spending”. As children are placed there by the courts, it works against its own mandate to cut the funding. In this, Peg works closely with a board that assists with funding, operations and legal difficulties. She was able to secure a trained social worker, a young Zulu woman, who has taken great initiative with the children (and others in a neighboring township) addressing the many traumas they have faced and seeking to give them some of the experiences that children of their age should have. Here, too, securing food and funding, as well as keeping on top of government regulations and inspections, is part of this Bag #2.

Most recently Peg’s “third bag” has been occasioned by an outreach of one of her own preschool teachers, a Zulu woman who saw the need in her own township to gather persons suffering from HIV-AIDS for support and even medical assistance. Their once-a-month meeting is also funded by Peg’s various outreach projects and sources. She has secured a trained nurse to come to their meetings to do routine assessments and help those who come to know what to do to sustain their health. Although this project was begun just a few months ago, it has grown steadily, evidence of the need.

Peg has many other smaller “bags” that keep her engaged in the parish and the Howick community. But to anyone who asks: “Baa baa black sheep, have you any wool? ‘Yes sir, yes sir, Peg’s bag is always full.”

*Judy Coyle, IHM*
**Overseas Update Format**

The *Overseas Update* is available only in a digital format on the IHM website and via email to South African friends. Doing our share to save a few trees!

**Thanks to**

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**The Next Issue**

will be published in May 2019. Please send any news and articles to Sue Rakoczy, IHM ([srakoczy@sjti.ac.za](mailto:srakoczy@sjti.ac.za)) by April 15. Thank you.