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COVID-19 RESPONSE: AT A GLANCE

REACHING OUT ON FOOT

We have not been able to run our normal education programme initiatives since lockdown began, so when lockdown level 4 came into effect, our fantastic education team took up the mantle of becoming frontline screeners and educators for Covid-19 by going house-to-house in the community. Trained by the doctors at Zithulele Hospital and armed with hygiene and education packs, our team set off to walk the hills, providing essential healthcare information and screening while also giving out educational resources to keep our young learners’ minds active.

MASK MADNESS

Since it became known that there was going to be a big need for masks, the young women on our Masiphakameni gap year programme have been working hard to keep up with demand. Learning sewing was always going to be a module on this programme, but the need for masks bumped this up the timeline and brought the girls out of Level 5 lockdown in order to provide this essential service. In order to have as many sewing machines as possible, we even managed to get two old, beautiful machines (seen below) working again, after they were donated to us a long time ago! We can’t afford to give out masks for free to everyone, so we are giving to those families with whom we work closely through our various projects, and the rest we are selling for cost price. Masks are sterilised before distribution and contain instructions for cleaning and sterilising, plus some general Covid-19 hygiene advice.
We probably all have pandemics, epidemics, viruses, contagion and other words like these on our minds at the moment. While Covid-19 might be current forerunner of the world’s attention, there are other “Famous Viruses” out there. For some, the 1st of December marks the start of the countdown to Christmas; for some it is a birthday (Happy birthday Karl - one of Jabulani’s founders and ongoing Director!), but for many across the globe, the 1st of December is most noted for being World Aids Day. World Aids Day has been observed since the 1st of December 1988. The intention of the day has always been to recognise the challenges and consequences of the HIV epidemic; an epidemic that was realised in 1988 as not being confined to certain geographic areas such as malaria, but as a worldwide concern. HIV/AIDS is a disease that according to the World Health Organisation, has infected over 75 million people and killed about 32 million, with Africa being the most affected.

We, the global ‘we’, continue to observe this day each year, in part to fight against the spread of the disease, but also to focus the world on the achievements and ongoing challenges within the world of HIV prevention, treatment, and research. For World Aids Day 2019, the Jabulani HIV/TB team joined forces with Nzulwini Clinic, one of the clinics that we partner with.

Along with other stakeholders, two events were planned - a soccer tournament that was specifically targeted at young men who are often reluctant to test for HIV; and a second community event that provided motivational education on prevention, HIV Counselling and Testing, and adherence to treatment. Both events were well attended (thankfully social distancing wasn’t an issue at the time!) and it was encouraging to be part of a motivated and enthusiastic group of varied stakeholders - it’s definitely a day that we will continue to observe, as we are far from beating this disease.

In the first half of last year, Lisenathi*, who was attending our Zithulele Preschool, really struggled to concentrate at school. He couldn’t stick with any activity for very long, was often distracting other learners, as well as generally being disruptive in the classroom. He demanded a lot of attention from the teaching team, since he had to be constantly monitored, and tended to seek attention.

The teaching team worked hard to determine what exactly it was that Lisenathi needed. Seeking advice, they consulted a Community Worker from the Jabulani team who has some experience regarding learning and attention difficulties, and they also shared ideas within the extended Jabulani education team.

We are so grateful for the funders who partner with us to provide the services and programmes that we have developed over the years. The way our funders responded to Covid-19 has been amazing, indicating not only an immediate understanding of the need for funds to be flexible as we stopped our usual programmes and developed necessary responses to the pandemic, but also that they trust us to know what is needed for the communities in which we work. We have also gratefully received additional support by way of food parcels for some of our most vulnerable families, from The Kamvalethu Foundation, The Lunchbox Fund, and Malamulele Onwards.

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Last December, Madwaleni Hospital hosted their annual Rolling Hills event. This sporting event for people with different kinds of disabilities is a real highlight of the year for some of the Zithulele participants, who spend the whole year preparing and training for this event. The 2019 event was no exception – it was a festive get together to celebrate ability, strength, fun and perseverance. With funding from our Rural Ability Programme and support from our Community Disability Workers, as well as our hospital-based Clinical Team Assistants, 13 participants were able to attend the event along with staff from Zithulele Hospital’s Rehabilitation Department.

The day caters for people of varying capacity for physical challenges. There was an event for children with cerebral palsy, whose buggys were pushed by an adult; a ‘hemi dash’ for children with hemiplegia; an assisted wheelchair race for wheelchair users who are pushed by a willing team mate; a 2km wheelchair race for active wheelchair users who can propel their own wheelchairs; and a 5km wheelchair race for wheelchair users who are able to propel themselves over greater distances. In the 5km race, the first 3 places were all taken by Zithulele team mates! These guys are truly amazing and we are so proud of them. It is quite common to see them racing their way up and down the hills around Zithulele as they go about their daily lives. The speeds they can get up to feel quite terrifying at times, as they fly past you at such a speed that you can barely get your greeting out in time before they pass you in a blur!

The progress being made with Lisenathi took a leap forward during the second half of the year, after we had vastly improved the classroom space. We added to the materials we use for ‘Activities for Everyday Living’ and began implementing the Montessori method three-hour ‘Work Cycle’. Lisenathi benefited from the more contained and ordered environment, and from the increased number of activities he could choose from. The team also settled into how best to work with him. They found that he needed to have a demonstration of an activity; then to do the activity alongside the teacher; then to do it on his own with a teacher close by; and finally he could be left to work alone.

By the end of Term 4, Lisenathi was able to choose and complete activities on his own the majority of the time, with significantly improved levels of concentration. He could have easily been labelled a trouble maker, been ignored by the teachers favouring “better behaved” kids, or asked to leave the school, but we believe that the teaching team’s patience and perseverance in looking for ‘what he needed’, created a positive change.

*name changed to protect his identity (photos are not of Lisenathi but other learners from our preschool).