



**IN THIS ISSUE**

[www.jabulanifoundation.org](http://www.jabulanifoundation.org)

- I AM ATHINI	.....pg 1
- PRE-SCHOOLS – A PLACE FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS TO LEARN!	.....pg 2
- STARTING TO SEE A DIFFERENCE	.....pg 3
- AT A GLANCE	.....pg 4

**I AM ATHINI**

“My name is Athini Mbono and I have the famous virus.” While there are many things she has done and said that have made a mark on Zithulele and the work that Jabulani does, it is these opening words from Athini's application to be an ARV Counsellor that will remain as some of her most memorable. Those words took guts to say and we have seen evidence of her guts, commitment and compassion for others on numerous occasions over the years. Athini was the second ever person to be employed by Jabulani back in 2008, and this month we took some time to catch up with her and find out a bit more about her story.

**JRHF:** Athini, you are a returner; someone who worked for Jabulani previously, then left and has now come back. Can you talk me through your journey with Jabulani since you started working with us originally in September 2008, when you started with us as a translator?

**Athini:** I started as a translator and then worked as an ARV counsellor. I enjoyed the job here and I was so happy but because of personal stuff, not the job, I decided to resign at the end of 2011. Last year, I came back and started volunteering and then was taken on as a translator when there was a vacancy. Jabulani made me what I am today. Jabulani helped many lives – I was the second person to be hired so I was a seed.

**JRHF:** And now you are working on the ECD in the Home programme.

**Athini:** I am happy as an ECD community worker but I sometimes miss the health side of my job. I have learnt a lot about ECD; how to talk to a child, how to deal with the challenges of a child and how to deal with the parents. Now I am having a friendship with the parents and they are so happy, they are interested in ECD. Things are better than before. Parents are now cooperating, they are interested in when I'm coming back and when I go back, they are happy to see me. They have questions for me when before they had no questions, they were just listening.

**JRHF:** What do you think has brought about the change in the parents' attitudes to ECD?

**Athini:** They saw the difference through trying to practice what we've advised them to do. They see that their child is better than before. They have learnt to trust me and the materials that I use when I visit them.

**JRHF:** What is it that makes you miss working in health?

**Athini:** I miss the general experience of health, I miss the counselling although that also kills me as I struggle not to



put the patient's problems onto myself! I miss forming friendships with the patients and mothers of the babies in paed's ward. Parents on the ECD programme don't share with me as much as patients did, and even if they share their problems, there is nothing I can do about. It is painful to me as I don't know where to refer them for help. At the hospital, there is a whole multidisciplinary team and a network of support but in the ECD programme, it is just us.

**JRHF:** Can you tell me a bit about your circumstances before you joined Jabulani and how you came to work with us?

**Athini:** It is a long story. In 2006, I came to Zithulele Hospital because my daughter was very, very sick. I met Dr. Ben Gaunt in paed's ward. My life at that time was doomed. I wrote him a letter asking for help, saying that I have no parents, I have this child, I'm HIV positive, my life is destroyed. He helped me, along with his wife Taryn, and we became friends. After my daughter was discharged, they offered me the opportunity to go back to school. I went to the Further Education and Training college in Mapuzi and I learnt there for about a year. Unfortunately I failed my matric because my aunt who was keeping my child while I was at school got cancer and died and my studies were disturbed and I failed. My cousin in Johannesburg then encouraged me to come to her and look for a job. I asked Taryn for a

transfer letter but she convinced me that that would not be a good idea as we needed to continue our healthcare here [for a variety of reasons]. She told me that there was going to be an organisation founded here and there might be opportunities for work and if I was able to wait a while, she should try and see if there could be an opportunity for me.

**JRHF:** You mentioned in a previous answer that you had no parents. Do you mind me asking what happened to them?

**Athini:** My father was married and had a family in Libode, but when he came back from Gauteng, he was employed at Botha Sigcau in Mtshatha, where he met my mom. I was born after their affair. When I was about six months old, they fought and my mom left me with him. My dad brought me up, he used to take me to work in a bag, but he died in a fire in our house and my mom also died in a shack fire. My aunt looked after me after he died.

**JRHF:** He used to take you to work in a bag?!

**Athini:** Yes. He used to open and close the gates at the

Botha Sigcau building. He told me once that the soldiers came and starting shooting at the building because they wanted Holomisa who was inside. He had me at work in a bag that day!

**JRHF:** You've faced some difficult circumstances in your life. What motivates you and gets you out of bed every day?

**Athini:** As I grew up, being young, not married, being a girl, what used to motivate me was having friends, music, knowing that I have a boyfriend who loves me. No one was telling me that I was beautiful and valuable in life when I was growing up – my father loved me but he was an old man and he didn't tell me as in our culture, it is not important to tell your child that you love them. So, when I met a boyfriend who was saying that I was beautiful and he loved me I was happy. Now I'm older, my husband says he loves me as I taught him to tell me that! But what motivates me is that God loves me, I have friends who love me and support me and I have a child. I am Athini. I thank God for that.

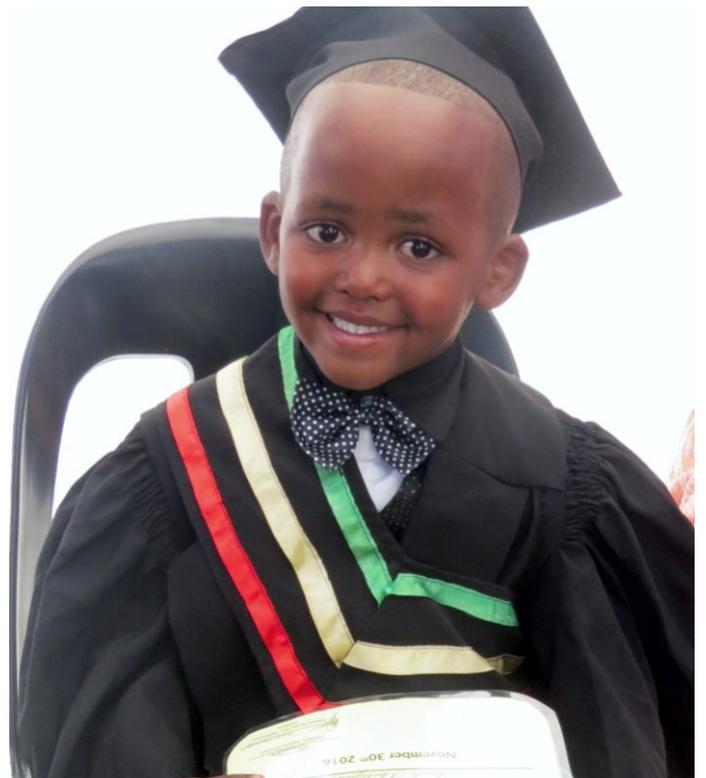
## PRE-SCHOOLS – A PLACE FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS TO LEARN!

As the year draws to a close, it is a good opportunity to look back on the year as well as forward to some of our plans for the coming year. With a new full time Education Coordinator, Erica, on the Jabulani team, we are able to embark on some new ventures and work towards more cohesion amongst the four arms of our Education programme, namely Pre-schools, ECD in the Home, the Library, and Zithudlala (Learning through play). With Erica's experience as a Montessori teacher, time has been spent preparing for introducing the Montessori Education Method into our Pre-schools next year.

Named after its founder, Dr Maria Montessori, the Montessori method is based on two simple truths: that children must be respected, and that children spontaneously love learning. Through her research, she theorised that children did not need to be forced to learn but that given the right materials and experiences, they would

want to learn. Her methods maximise the fact that children go through a period of special sensitivity between the ages of 2½ and 6 years and that during this time their minds are open to learning in a different way from any other age group. The Montessori Method grew out of what the children did naturally, and both materials and the learning environment are intended to allow children to be independent and thoughtful. Our pre-schools' environments are being prepared for introducing this new method of learning from next year.

Zithulele Pre-school remains a hub for teacher training. Every week, approximately 15-20 pre-school teachers and ECD Playgroup Facilitators from the surrounding areas gather together to learn from Principal Thandeka, Erica, and from each other. The teachers have been receiving training on the Montessori Method and will continue to receive this training throughout the coming year. In addition,



after the success of using the The Wordworks Every Word Counts materials in our ECD in the Home project (mentioned in our last newsletter), we decided to implement them in our pre-schools too. Principal Thandeka is receiving ongoing training to be an Every Word Counts Facilitator and in turn, shares her knowledge with teachers from all over the surrounding areas. We have received some amazing colourful charts and booklets in Xhosa to make training even more interesting.

To close the year, we had graduation ceremonies at both Khanyisa and Zithulele Pre-schools. As the schools were so much bigger this year, we had to have separate events for the first time. All dressed in their graduation gowns and big smiles, the graduates received their certificates along with a goodie bag for each learner - Bookdash sponsored Xhosa

and English storybooks; a knitting group in Pretoria made charming little dolls, and students from Jakob-Friedrich-Schöllkopf-Schule near Stuttgart in Germany who together with teacher Ramona Albrecht are long term supporters of our Education programmes, took great care in packaging pencil cases full of stationery. These students also collected a number of beautiful decorations for the events and many other resources that will be used in the schools next year. The graduates entertained the parents with some songs and dancing and the parents cooked a lovely meal and everyone celebrated this auspicious occasion.

The school holidays have now arrived. The teachers and children can have a well-deserved break. The playgrounds and classrooms will be quiet for now, waiting in anticipation for what 2017 will bring!

## STARTING TO SEE A DIFFERENCE

Sizamile\* gained a place at university to study a Bachelor of Arts. He had never left his rural home before. He got a lift to Cape Town with Mark\* who had been visiting a friend in Zithulele, who dropped Sizamile off at the accommodation he had managed to arrange. The next day, Mark felt uneasy and tried to call Sizamile but got no answer. Eventually he decided to go and see if he could find him in the vicinity of where he'd dropped Sizamile off. He found him wandering the streets. With no street savvy and obviously looking like a fish out of water, Sizamile had been mugged within moments of being dropped off and was left with no phone and no money to pay rent or buy food!

Bulelani\* likewise gained a place to study Pharmacy at university. At the end of his first year, he gained 99% for maths, but failed computers. Not really surprising seeing as he had never touched a computer before starting at university. Unfortunately on the basis of this failure, the university wanted to fail him from first year altogether. With people who he could call on for support, negotiations were conducted and an agreement reached that would allow him to progress on to second year.

Then there was Dumisa\*, whose matric marks from July to December improved by more than 20% but he had already been rejected by Universities based on his June results. He needed something constructive and worthwhile to do for a year while he reapplied. On the basis of his final matric marks, he was accepted with a full bursary to study Pharmacy.

It was experiences like these, and our own experience of employing people with no work experience, that gave birth to the Jump Start gap year programme in 2014, that Jabulani runs in partnership with Axiom Education. Growing up in the rural Eastern Cape has many limitations, one of which is access to skills training and opportunities for young people to develop some of the lifeskills and extracurricular skills that many of their urban or upper income counterparts take for granted. A lack of opportunities means that even if they manage to gain a place at a tertiary institution after completing

matric, they are immediately on a back-foot in comparison to some of their classmates.

During 2016, we had our third intake of Jump Start participants. As in previous years, they were taken through a thorough mentorship programme that can be roughly divided into four areas, namely Business/Academic; Social; Skills/Trade; and Physical. Over 50 different modules were covered, ranging from computers, chess and cooking, to swimming and sewing, public speaking and public service; with a good spread of practical/physical activities and classroom style learning. All participants once again undertook a work placement for the duration of the programme, either with the NGOs or Zithulele Hospital, which carries the opportunity to develop a good work ethic, gain experience while being held accountable and learning how to conduct themselves in the workplace, as well as earn a small stipend. They guys pushed themselves through personal fears and barriers to complete the White Clay trail run and the 6 day, 120km Epic Trek from Kei River Mouth back to Zithulele, including many hours of hiking, plus swimming and river crossings that required significant amounts of courage.

Graduation, an event that the guys organised themselves and also cooked for, revealed that as in previous years, the group had been hugely impacted by the programme and saw not only themselves, but the world, in a new light. We wish Sibusiso, Gcobani, Zimasile, Bhekisisa, Khangelani and Lutho all the best as they move on to whatever they have chosen to do next and hope that they will find themselves just a little bit better equipped to handle it! To quote one of the speakers from graduation night, "Out of Zithulele, something beautiful is happening. If you can't see it, I pray that God will open your eyes."

\*Names changed to protect identities; all previous Axiom Education students, except Mark (the lift giver)



**MADZIT TRAIL RUN**

Jabulani hosted the second Madzit 28km trail run at the end of October, this time starting from Zithulele and ending at Madwaleni Hospital. We were grateful to have the event sponsored by Twizza and the Eastern Cape Development Corporation East London and were assisted on the day by teams from Axiom Education, Grace Vision, Bulungula Incubator and Madwaleni Hospital. We had 55 runners, mostly locals although a few from further afield joined in too. A light drizzle and overcast conditions provided perfect race weather. The winner, Andile, improved last year's winning time by 20 minutes to finish in a time of 2 hours and 8 minutes, followed by the promising Jabulani employees, Lulamile in 2nd place and Wonga in 3rd. In the women's category the winner, Annamart, finished in an amazing 4th place overall in a time of 2 hours 20 minutes! All in all, it was a very successful day. Thanks to everyone who volunteered and well done to all the runners.



**GARDEN HOUSE**

Our latest accommodation venture, this time to house NGO employed staff, has been the building of a 3 bedroom house located on Mission land belonging to the local church. This house has been funded by Jabulani and the Christian Blind Mission who fund our Rural Ability Programme and we are grateful for the church's willingness to allow us to use some of their garden in order to accommodate more people in Zithulele. Some of the features of the house include wheelchair friendly access to the whole house, including the shower and kitchen. It also has an independent water supply with two rain water tanks, palisade fencing and a beautiful wooden deck with a view over the garden.



**NON-CLINIC CARE**

Our quarterly, non-clinic events (i.e. Saturday events, separate from hospital consultations) for our children, adolescents and caregivers are beginning to bear fruit. We have noticed an improvement in our patients' self-esteem, better engagement and participation in activities and discussions, and caregivers have also testified to a change in behaviour at home with regards to self-expression. We had our last event of the year at the beginning of December, which was well attended by 31 children and teens ranging between the ages of 8-17. We had age-appropriate discussions about dealing with peer pressure, as well as belonging and identity, and a little celebration to end off the year. We look forward to building on this success next year.

