



AMASANGO

Friends of Amasango

Newsletter, April 2018
www.amasango.org.uk

Editor Focus: Why the pupils of Amasango School need your support now

I have been a Trustee for the Friends of Amasango for nearly 15 years following my first visit to Amasango school in the summer holidays of 2002. I had just finished my training as a secondary Art teacher and probably should have been preparing for my first job. Instead I spent 5 weeks working with the pupils of Amasango setting up an Art curriculum there in the railway buildings of Grahamstown, South Africa. Never have I felt more motivated and inspired and I still see that summer as a life changing moment for me.

I've returned several times over the years and each time the school has evolved, grown and strengthened in its presence in Grahamstown as a community. Families know Amasango exists and come to seek help for their children. Children are now infrequently found on the streets begging outside the shops but rather approach the school. The school Welfare Officer, funded by the Friends of Amasango, also follows leads and visits families known to have children out of education in order to enrol them at Amasango. The law now requires children to be accompanied by an adult if they wish to register at the school – this can be a frustrating process, but, with families more involved and more accountable, more children are seeing their education through.

The difference at Amasango from the rest of state education in South Africa is that it is entirely free. State education itself in South Africa is free, however, uniform, books and equipment must be paid for – this is an immediate barrier to many families. The Friends of Amasango was originally set up to cover these aspects and in addition provide nourishment to pupils. It is well known that without sufficient nourishment our bodies are not ready to learn, concentrate and thrive.

Yours and our support of the pupils at Amasango has an immediate and long term effect on individual and family lives;

- 1. 3 meals a day (1 provided by the South African Education Department) = healthy balanced diet and children not distracted by hunger**
- 2. School uniform = Identity within the community, a sense of purpose and a reason not to miss school**
- 3. Additional staffing = Extra academic and pastoral support for the most vulnerable members of society, positive role models and access to skills training**
- 4. Weekend and holiday food parcels = continued nourishment and investment in families**
- 5. Past pupil support = belief and encouragement in becoming independent and moving into adulthood**

My support for the work of Amasango is unflinching and I hope that you will continue to see the benefit in your support too. Some of you are long term, regular supporters, others continue to knit hats and scarves for the learners, many of you attend fundraising ventures and some of you have a one off connection with the charity. We are grateful for you all. But the needs of Amasango are increasing as more children enrol due to the extreme deprivation in the local area.

Unemployment remains extremely high with drug and alcohol abuse leading to increased domestic violence, neglect and physical and sexual abuse. Amasango is one part of leading children away from these factors and supporting them in becoming active citizens in the community.

Last summer I met with several former pupils who are now working in Grahamstown and are financially stable and supporting themselves and their families. I was deeply touched that they thanked me, and all of you, in saying that without Amasango they may not even have survived childhood, and certainly would not have had the confidence or belief that they could succeed at school or in life. They are so grateful. Your support will ensure that others also have these opportunities in life. Thank you,

Rebecca Pennells

News from Amasango: Prize Giving Ceremony

Christina Thomas's brief visit to Grahamstown in December 2017 coincided with prizegiving at the end of term. The event was held in the City Hall. There were a number of speeches with music from the marimba band and dancing in between. There were crafts on sale, pottery and sewn items, aprons, etc.

When it came to prize-giving each class was introduced by their form tutor, and each child received at least one prize, either for academic achievement and effort or for helpfulness and other praiseworthy attributes. Seven learners will progress to high school this year, amongst them Zanelle whom I have known for five years since she first entered the school. Like so many of the students at the school she has faced many problems in her life, and progression to high school is a tribute to her perseverance and determination. (Right: Zanelle when she joined Amasango in 2013)



Climbing to new heights for Amasango: Hannah Peters (Hon Treasurer)



This pushed Hannah to her absolute limits as people who know her will know physical challenges aren't necessarily her forte. The expedition took 13 days, climbing 5400m above sea level, however it was worth the struggle the money raised has directly helped the children at Amasango gain an education which many of us take for granted. So far, Hannah has raised £1000 for Amasango.



*"Everest Base Camp? Completed it mate. 🍌
🗨️ Don't think I've ever been so happy as I was at this moment! Thanks to everyone who supported me and the Friends of Amasango on this incredible journey"*

Date for the diary: Rorkes Drift presentation by SA Guide Paul Garner, 24th July 2018 @ 7pm

Paul Garner is a guide with over 20 years experience leading tours in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Botswana, including expeditions in search of the Lost City of the Kalahari. He has an abiding passion for Africa, its history, fauna and flora, with a special interest in birding, battlefields and rock art. **There's a rare opportunity to hear him speak in the UK on Tuesday July 24 at 7pm in The Middle Room, All Saints Church Hall, 70a Fulham High Street, London SW6 3LJ.**

Tickets: £25 per person (to include a glass of wine).

To book email Pam Davies pedsw6@gmail.com or phone on 01590 719875



Thank you for your ongoing support for the pupils and staff at Amasango. Your donations make a huge difference to the lives of many families in Grahamstown. www.amasango.org.uk