



# Youth TODAY

JULY 2008

A newsletter for friends of Girls and Boys Town

## Counting our blessings – and building bright futures

What a journey it has been since Boys' Town (as it was then called) opened its first residential centre in Magaliesburg in 1958, to 26 boys. Today – 50 years on – the Magaliesburg home's part of a countrywide network of four Youth Development Centres and four Family Homes, all of which can accommodate hundreds of girls and boys.

**B**ut it's not only the number of youngsters we care for that's grown. Many vital services have been launched in the interests of serving the children in our care, their families, schools, professionals and all of South Africa's youth.

All along it has been Girls and Boys Town's intention to *reintegrate* children and youth back into their families and communities within the shortest time and with the least disruption possible. We'd rather strengthen families enabling them to effectively deal with their challenges and solve them – which is why we introduced our *Common Sense Parenting* programme via our regional Training and Resource Centres in 2001.

This is one of many family programme options that Girls and Boys Town provides for parents and caregivers.



We started accepting girls in 2005, after changing our name to Girls and Boys Town in 2004.

The introduction of our National Hotline in 1999 gave children – and their caregivers – a number to call, for help, advice and in some cases, counselling services.

Girls and Boys Town now also offer families a home-based family consultancy option; our mobile teams go to families and support them in their own

home environments. Families have the opportunity to rediscover strengths and further build skills.

Just as every year in a child's life presents new challenges, it's not that different in Girls and Boys Town's journey.

From the fire that devastated our Magaliesburg Youth Development Centre in 1975 to the relocation of our Cape Duin-en-Dal home in 1985 because of political unrest in Crossroads, no era has been without its hardships. But these – and many others –



Offering various programme options to parents, caregivers and educators – as well as frequent evaluation of our own staff – keeps us abreast of issues affecting the youth.

were met head-on, with the children's interests at heart, and with the backing and blessing of our staff, Board and supporters.

With every challenge comes the opportunity for Girls and Boys Town to reassess and evaluate where and how we can better serve our youth, families, schools, other professionals and communities via our ongoing evaluations, assessments and now, recently in-house research activities.

### Supporters

As Girls and Boys Town celebrates 50 years of sterling service to South Africa's children, families, other community based professionals, organisations and schools – and gives thanks for the countless people and friends who have played a part in making all this possible – we ask that

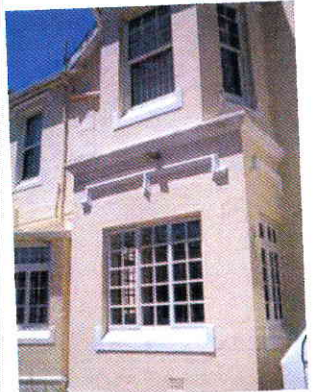
you also take stock of your special place in the Girls and Boys Town family.

Every one of our supporters fulfils a valuable role in the lives and futures of the children who count on Girls and Boys Town – as well as all those who impact on their healthy growth and development. Thank you for what you give them today – and for the chance you give them for a bright future.

Thank you!



Your generosity has helped us to better secure our residential homes. As you can see from the photos above, our girls are happy with the new gate at our Alpha Family Home – and sturdy burglar guards are also now in place. Thank you for your understanding and sterling support!



Safe and sound, thanks to better security measures – and thanks to you!



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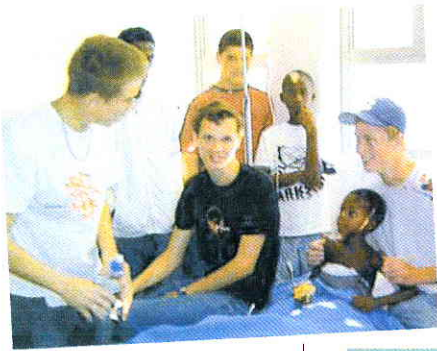


## Girls and Boys Town youth 'give back'

**L**earning to consider others – teaching the value of generosity – and reaching out a hand of help – are important life skills. This is why every Girls and Boys Town involves their youth in community help and support projects. Whether it's taking gifts to children in hospital, clearing out alien vegetation at an old age home, picking up litter at the beach

or helping to build houses with Habitat for Humanity, our girls and boys enjoy 'giving back'.

Having a heart for others – and learning that we are all part of a greater, interdependent whole, helps our youth develop a service ethic. We're proud of our girls' and boys' willingness to get involved in community projects whenever they can. 



Giving a toy to a child in hospital.

Thank you meeting t of us kids

Thank everything for us and you to kn appreciate t you!

## Family Homes or Youth Development Centres?

**G**irls and Boys Town has two types of residential facility: Family Homes and Youth Development Centres.

Each Family Home caters for a maximum number of 10 boys or girls, who live with a care-giving couple – Family Teachers supported by an

Assistant Family Teacher. These homes provide a child-centred family-style environment, while enabling children to learn various social skills and coping mechanisms on a day-to-day basis. All children attend schools in the community.

Girls and Boys Town has Family Homes in Verulam, Glenwood (KwaZulu-Natal), Kenilworth and Claremont (Cape).


Our Youth Development Centres are larger; each can

house 60 to 70 children, in addition to staff. There's greater emphasis on self-government –



Boys outside our Macassar Youth Development Centre.

through our unique Peer Group System – where young people are empowered to learn leadership and self-governing skills, under the supervision of adult staff. Youth attend schools in the community.

Our Youth Development Centres are in Magaliesburg, Kagiso-Randfontein (Gauteng), Macassar (Cape) and Tongaat (KwaZulu-Natal). 

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Thank you you have do so far. You difference

Thanks for GBT, we apprecia hope God b




Our Alpha Family Home.

## Leadership trail leaves lasting lessons

**Y**outh from Girls and Boys Town participated in – and thoroughly enjoyed – their Outward Bound and Wilderness Leadership Trail experiences.

They had to 'rough it' and live in harmony with nature, while also learning valuable life and leadership lessons.

Months after these courses, the boys and girls are still mindful of the lessons they'd learned. A Glenwood Family Home youth shared: *'We mustn't do something to prove somebody else wrong. We must do things to prove ourselves what is possible and what isn't possible.'* 



Our youngsters enjoyed their wilderness experience.

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Girls and Bo believes in b accountable supporters. distribute th percentage of donation to whom it's in you can see illustration:

## Mother's Day



Moms came out tops at our Tongaat Youth Development Centre recently, when Mother's Day was celebrated.

## Congrats, Jakes



Principal of Girls and Boys Town Tongaat, Jakes Raman (left) is congratulated on 30 years of service by Lukraj Ramphal, one of the first boys at the project.




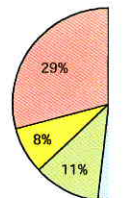
'Inmate' Ken Ford of Sunshine Hospital is 'guarded' by the Girls and Boys Town Magaliesburg Mayor and Councillor.

## Jailed for a good cause

**C**elebrities and members of the community were 'arrested' in the name of Girls and Boys Town's Jail and Bail fundraiser. Until they could raise enough bail money, they were confined to their cell – much to the amusement of passing shoppers – at the Northmead Mall.

Fortunately, the 'inmates' family and friends were happy to bail them out, since Girls and Boys Town would benefit from their freedom.

Thank you to all our 'prisoners' (and their bail sponsors!) for your wonderful support – and to East Rand Stereo for publicising this event. 



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## Many programmes to address many challenges

Girls and Boys Town has a wide range of programmes all developed to effectively address various challenges.

**O**ur *Common Sense Parenting Programme*, which was introduced in 2001, has already helped dozens of parents, caregivers and people who either care for or work with children.

Another key development in our Family Services Division was the introduction, in 2006, of the Building Skills in High-Risk Families programme.

While this programme aims to strengthen and empower the families of the children in our care, as well as families in the community – it also strives to reunify our youth with their families as quickly as possible. And it has been overwhelmingly successful ...

Last year, our KwaZulu-Natal Family Homes team successfully reunified 90% of the youth from our Verulam Family Home with their families.

### Education

Our programmes – as trained by the regionally-based training teams – have attracted the attention of key role players in the field of education. The University of Potchefstroom invited us to submit and

present a paper on Learner Discipline – and we've made several presentations at educators' conferences.

Girls and Boys Town also participated in the public hearing organised by the Human Rights Commission in Cape Town, to address the topic of 'Violence in Schools'.



Mark Abrahams with educators who completed our Well-Managed Classroom programme.

Amongst the education programmes already taught to over 200 schools and 5070 educators (impacting on 182 713 learners) are the *Well-Managed Classroom*, *Safe and Effective Secondary Schools* and *Specialised Classroom Management* workshops.

Feedback to all the programmes offered by Girls and Boys Town has consistently been positive. Why? Because the training is

effective: it works!

*'I would recommend this workshop to every teacher in South Africa. It works.'*

– Educator

For more information about educator and parenting programmes in Gauteng, please contact our office on 011 482-2655 or e-mail [gptr@gbtown.org.za](mailto:gptr@gbtown.org.za). For Cape-based training, please call 021 939 8085 or e-mail [wctr@gbtown.org.za](mailto:wctr@gbtown.org.za)

## Providing quality care

At Girls and Boys Town we believe in the power of feedback. Regular evaluations at every project – and the feedback we receive from our youth, parents, teachers, staff and professional evaluators – all combine to continually assess the effectiveness of our work and ways in which to improve it.

**I**t ensures that Girls and Boys Town grows, adjusts to changing conditions, remains accountable in every area and guarantees the highest standards of service excellence. As a result of these practices, programmes are kept relevant and up-to-date.

### Specific standards

The standards we've set for our work with youth go far beyond meeting their physical needs and protecting their rights and safety. They demand that the most effective methods and skills are employed in working with challenging and inappropriate

behaviour.

Training in these methods is compulsory for Girls and Boys Town staff working with children. Staff skills and practice methods are assessed annually to monitor and ensure that the highest standards of practice excellence are maintained.

### Positive

Cavell Siems, a Family Teacher at our Verulam Family Home in KwaZulu-Natal, was recently awarded her 10th Certification. Although Cavell's been working with youth at risk at Girls and Boys Town for 12 years – it's the quality of her work that's recognised by 'certification'.

Well done, Cavell!



Cavell Siems, who achieved her 10th Certification, proudly holds up her certificate – while delighted husband, Ernie looks on.

## Peer Group System sets Girls and Boys Town apart

**S**ince its earliest days, Girls and Boys Town's unique Peer Group System of Self-Government has succeeded in getting youngsters to accept responsibility for their actions. Ours are the only care centres in South Africa where the youth – under the guidance of adults – are significantly involved in decision-making concerning their own affairs.

The Council body comprises a

Mayor and up to six councillors who are elected by their peers every six-months based on merit.

The basic premise is that you can't talk to youth about responsibility unless you're prepared to trust them with that responsibility. This self-governing system capitalises on the desire of young people to be respected and admired by their peers – in a positive way.



The Mayor and Councillors at Girls and Boys Town Magaliesburg.

## From our



**S**ince my handover from Joe nine months ago, I haven't been following in only one set of big footprints ... Girls and Boys Town is surrounded by hundreds of them! I have been moved by the support of friends, supporters, volunteers and donors such as yourselves. Thank you for your letters, calls and demonstrations of support – not only for me in my new role, but for your ongoing commitment to and belief in all that we do for at-risk young people and families.

After 50 years of youth-focused service, Girls and Boys Town has developed astounding depths of knowledge, skills and talent ... as well as half a century's worth of true stories of courage, strength and faith.

We recently held a 50th event at our Magaliesburg centre, and with the youth were able to honour and value all those who came before us ... and all those who will follow: founders, supporters, donors, staff, volunteers – and of course the youth themselves.

Similar days of honour and appreciation will be held in KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape, when we will share with you our appreciation of all that you do for young people who find themselves in vulnerable circumstances.

Thank you for creating safer and happier lives for young people – and for continuing to support us as we expand into situations where youth are at risk.

No matter how you support us – whether you donate R20 or R20 000 – every Rand helps. We value and appreciate the caring of each and every one of our donors. Thank you for ensuring that we all leave our significant footprints in the sand for struggling young people, especially as we enter hard and challenging economic times. **"We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop."**

*Lee Loynes*

Lee Loynes  
Chief Executive Officer



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# Much more than 'residential care'

## Our Site Certification a proud achievement



In 1996, faced with the challenge of heightening the effectiveness and professionalism of the work done with youth, Girls and Boys Town SA invested in having key staff trained in the highly effective 'Family Home Model of Care', with the help of Girls and Boys Town USA. This help involved technical, but no financial support.

As we developed capacity to support this model of care internally, we were then able to apply for Site Certification. This effectively meant that GBTSA was able to apply for the right to empower/train other organisations in the use of this model.

All operational aspects had to be implemented to a specified standard for Site Certification to be granted. It was therefore a very significant moment of development in our history when we achieved Site Certification in 2002 for the first time.

This gave rise to our accelerated expansion of services outside the residential services, to services in the community.

But these high standards had to be maintained. And it was reason for celebration again when we achieved Site Certification for the second time in 2004.

Continuing to maintain these high standards of implementation has also allowed Girls and Boys Town South Africa to access Girls and Boys Town USA's extensive research, which informs new developments in the programmes and services.

## Our Vision

Youth, families and communities; South Africa's strength and future.

## Our Mission

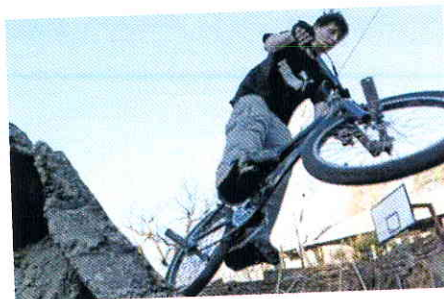
Creating opportunities for youth to grow and develop into responsible citizens, able to contribute to family and community life in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, equality and solidarity with others.

**G**irls and Boys Town may well offer residential care, but it's also more – much more – than this. A wide range of therapeutic and professional services is offered for the benefit of every boy and girl in our care and who benefit from our services.

To develop children's social, relationship-building and life skills – as well as their self-government and leadership abilities – a daily programme of behavioural skills teaching is provided by Girls and Boys Town's child and youth care staff. This serves our youth well in every area of their lives today – and will continue to serve them in the future, long after they've left our care.

### Educational support

Protrem (meaning 'in the meantime') units in each region provide remedial and educational support to youth who come into our care. More often than not, children have missed school and



need considerable help to 'catch up' or simply cope with academic demands. This service will soon be available to schools in the community.

Counselling and therapeutic interventions are critical to the healing of young people and families. The help that a child receives at Girls and Boys Town extends to and involves the family, with the

aim of empowering members to effectively deal with life's challenges and solve them independently.

### Sport and recreation

Encouraging youth to participate in sport and recreational activities – and 'give back' through volunteer or community initiatives – is part of life at Girls and Boys Town.

Girls and Boys Town is non-denominational, so all youth are encouraged to practice the religion of their and their parents choice.

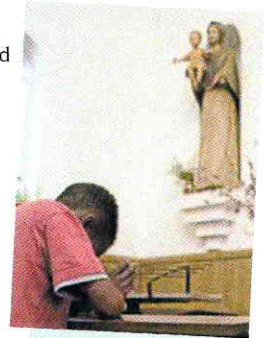
You'll find an interesting programme of healthy living education evident at all our centres. This includes the teaching of topics such as HIV/Aids, TB, sexually transmitted infections, safety, eating habits, drugs, responsible life values, building and maintaining healthy relationships.

### 'No' to drugs

While Girls and Boys Town is not a drug rehabilitation centre, we acknowledge that some youth have experimented with drugs in the past. Drug use – and abuse – is also one of the most pressing issues facing children today.

This is why we – with the valued support of our sponsors and donors – developed a more focused and effective Chemical Dependency programme at all facilities in 2006. Every child admitted to Girls and Boys Town benefits from this – whether or not they've used drugs before.

As you can see, Girls and Boys Town is committed to helping youth to be the best they can be now – and to helping them become successful, productive members of society in the future.



*'I have thought seriously about changing my previous negative involvement with friends and drugs. I am honest when I make mistakes and am trying to find more healthy activities to be involved in.'*  
- Boy at Girls and Boys Town.

# That 'Green Monster'

This is not a living thing, but a fond reference to the famous green Girls and Boys Town bus!

**T**his huge vehicle was given to the then Boys' Town by Lady Oppenheimer in 1963. It was finally declared beyond repair in 1982, but not before leaving us with many hilarious – and hair-raising – memories. As described by a 'Green Monster' youth passenger: *'Some years ago a large number of hard-boiled eggs was left on the bus after it arrived at Munster. The bus was locked for the four-week holiday. When we entered the bus to pack for the return journey, we fell out of the bus – now we felt like 'green monsters'. Not even litres of Jeyes Fluid helped to get rid of the stink. Many boys and the drivers felt nauseous all the way home.'*



The Green Monster's life was characterised by breakdowns – a trip without one was a rarity. Over the years, many journeys to Camp Caroline in Munster – Girls and Boys Town's South Coast holiday home – would involve blown pistons, oil spurts, earth-shaking, shuddering, heaving halts and many mechanical mysteries. On one occasion, said an old boy, *'it was saved from cremation by one of the boys who was quick on the draw with the fire extinguisher'*.

Trips also involved long waiting periods – which sometimes saw boys fervently praying (literally!) for the bus's recovery ... all this while the nearest mechanic was frantically summonsed to make the Green Monster mobile again!

### Hammocks

The bus's spacious interior served as a dining room and play room at Munster before the buildings were finished. Boys stretched out on the floor under the seats; some made hammocks with their blankets – and the smaller boys slept on the luggage racks under the roof.

As much as we relished the arrival of a much-needed new bus – funded by friends and donors like you in 2003 – there was also a twinge of sadness as the Green Monster was finally laid to rest, and now stands as a memorial at Girls and Boys Town Magaliesburg.