



59 years of celebration — as we help youth to shine.

MAY 2017

A newsletter for friends of Girls and Boys Town

Magaliesburg welcomes 2017's elected leaders

Our Magaliesburg campus recently held its annual inauguration ceremony, acknowledging this year's newly-elected leaders who now inherit the responsibility of continuing the core values of Girls and Boys Town's peer group system.

Our new mayor's first official act of duty was to pledge his commitment to leadership: *"It is my role to encourage and motivate my Councillors and to assure the community that I am willing to lead them. To make me strong, I need my fellow Councillors to walk beside me. Together we can conquer all fears, disappointments, regrets, and failures that may occur. Allow me to serve in order to be a great leader - because the greatest leadership lies in those who are not afraid to serve others."*



Our newly elected Mayor with senior staff, flanked by 2017's new Councillors.



The Oath was read by each Councillor



New Councillors light candles to mark the new term

This unique concept of self-government is what sets Girls and Boys Town apart. Here, our youths are given the opportunity to be involved in their own daily responsibilities and decision-making.

Under the guidance of adults, our girls and boys choose their Mayor and Councillors - a process that creates leaders and instills great responsibility, now and for life.

Well done Mr Mayor and Councillors! We wish you all the very best on this wonderful journey of leading your peers on the correct path during 2017. May you all Shine™.

Team Building for Newly Elected Councillors



The new leaders set off on an obstacle course clutching a small blue cup filled with water. The water represents each boy's life troubles — you have to carry those with you, so the challenge was do not spill any of the water, and you can not hand the cup to someone else. Completing the course without getting in each other's way was a lesson in learning to carry your troubles with you while working together with others to find a way through.

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.

Benefits of a bequest to Girls & Boys Town

A bequest in a Will to Girls and Boys Town, a registered Public Benefit Organisation in terms of Section 18A of the Income Tax Act (Act 58 of 1962) is deducted from the value of your estate, which may be subject to estate duty. Your bequest to Girls & Boys Town will consequently be entirely free from estate duty and will reduce the portion of your estate which is subject to Estate Duty.



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Growth beyond the Town

Unavoidably, our youth grow up — and their time with us ends. And while that means our responsibility towards them ends too, the caring certainly does not. So, saying goodbye is not an end, but rather the beginning of natural parental concern

Where do they go? How are they coping with life? Are they successfully applying — and benefiting from — the values they learnt during their time with us?

Our *Growth Beyond the Town* research project conducts follow-up interviews with disengaging and past youth to see how they are coping in life after their time at Girls and Boys Town.

We started this project in 2012 and are currently in our sixth year of follow-up interviews with a total of 96 alumni. This longitudinal study includes a follow-up interview with youth the first year after they leave Girls and Boys Town and then again every year after that. This year some past students have just had their four-year follow-up interview. This research is being compiled into a report that will be available soon.

Throughout the years, we have had fieldworkers tirelessly make their way around the country to track down past youth, proving to be a very difficult task in cases where there are no traces of contact numbers or places of work. And yet we have managed to visit so many in their homes and hear their incredible stories.

Peer research an exciting addition

Now, we are excited to announce peer research as an extension to the *Growth Beyond the Town* Project, recruiting Girls and Boys Town alumni as fieldworkers to help us find and capture the stories of others who have left our homes.

Our first peer researcher recently trained and conducted his first follow-up interviews. It was a learning experience for all of us, and we hope to continue to include him and more youth in our fieldworker team. The goal is to have more of our research steered and conducted by people who have themselves lived the experience being studied.

The incredible stories we hear from our Girls and Boys Town alumni have prompted us to have them share their stories with our other staff and youth. We believe they have so much experience and insight to offer, an amazing learning opportunity for our current girls and boys. It is so important to us that we provide our youth with as much guidance and insight into the world as possible, so that they can learn from it and direct their paths now and after they have left Girls and Boys Town.

Thank you for being part of helping to build the lives of these great young South Africans. We truly value your friendship.

Lee Loynes
LEE LOYNES
Chief Executive Officer

Learning to raise food from the earth

In March 2017, we interviewed Sipho, one of our ex-youth who disengaged from us in 2015. He comes from a deep rural area in KZN with grinding poverty and no prospects of employment. Sipho travelled almost five hours each way and stayed over two days to attend the interview in Durban. During the interview, he described the many hardships he has had to face since leaving care, including his inability to secure work, go to school, or even have enough food to eat. Directly after the interview, this prompted us to call a colleague involved in food farming and sustainable living. The colleague came over and ran a very short introductory skills training in growing food in collectives with Sipho.

Together, they purchased seeds for Sipho, including spinach, cabbage, sweet potatoes, beetroot, butternut, and pumpkin. The message to this youth was that being poor does not mean going without food if he can grow his own food. He just needs the know-how. She also showed Sipho photos of some of her projects, and trained him on how to work with his friends so they can grow food together. She also provided her cell number to do ongoing mentoring. Sipho has gone back home with the promise to set up his vegetable patch.



Responding to the needs of our care-leavers ...

Our *Growth Beyond the Town* follow-up interviews with past youth also provide us with opportunities to do some aftercare work with them. Above and below are two recent examples from KwaZulu-Natal, reported by our area fieldworker. These are both wonderful examples of how, through our research, our fieldworkers are able to hear care-leavers' stories and use their knowledge and networks to connect the youth with others in the community to further support them

Hope through further study

Another youth who we reached out to in March 2017 as part of our research was a youth who left us in March 2016. During his interview, he described how he has been battling to find permanent work. Despite this, he lives independently and rents a room on his own north of



March 2017 Alumni

Durban. He has some electrical skills and a certificate which he got during his stay at a Girls and Boys Town Family Home. During the interview, we quickly realised how responsible this young man was. On this basis, we spoke to the owner of the Skills Training Centre where he had previously trained and they immediately asked us to send him back to the school, as they may be able to assist him — and give him further hope to Shine™.



Dr. Frimpong-Manso from the University of Ghana.

Now, Africa embraces our research methods

We are particularly proud of the recent recognition our *Growth Beyond the Town* longitudinal research approach has achieved, being adopted by academics in other African countries. Dr Kwabena Frimpong-Manso from the University of Ghana, is already underway in replicating our study in Ghana and Ethiopia and Dr Admire Chereni has also more recently approached us to replicate our study in Zimbabwe. This replication process

involves training these academics in the tools we have designed to conduct our research, which they then carry out in their own respective countries. We are then able to collaborate and share data which allows for important comparisons to be drawn between Girls and Boys Town leavers and those from other African countries. We will also learn what the best practice for youth-leaving care is from each other, meaning we can constantly be learning and providing the very best for our graduates!

REUNITING FAMILIES

It's changed us both, say mom and daughter

Children often desperately need opportunities where they can be introduced to alternative ways of understanding life and the way it should be lived — and opportunities to Shine™. This was the case with Laurie, who had a very strained and unhealthy relationship with her mother Nadine.

Nadine suffered from depression - and a past that Laurie struggled to come to terms with. As a result, Laurie constantly acted out against her mother, always responding in anger, and even began stealing from her. Things got progressively worse and Nadine could not cope with her daughter on her own. This was when she turned to us for help.

When Laurie came to Girls and Boys Town, things began to turn around. While a family worker worked with Nadine in her home, Laurie was placed in our therapeutic and caring residential environment during the most challenging time of her teenage years.

It was not easy in the beginning: The Residential and Family Service social workers worked hard to help Laurie and me with coping skills and the journey was long, remembers Nadine.

But intervention from Girls and Boys Town was the only answer for this mother and daughter. My Family Worker gave me numerous tasks to carry out in order to help me cope with Laurie and monitor

her behaviour at home. My wish was that Laurie and I would have a healthy and happy mother-daughter relationship. My Family Worker helped me to keep focused on this, even through the difficult times when I wanted to give up.

Nadine is now experiencing the fruits of the Girls and Boys Town intervention. Laurie's confidence in herself, her own worth and abilities has impacted her outlook on the world and her relationship with her mother hugely. Laurie now takes well to chores when she's home on the weekends and lately she goes the extra mile.

As she has grown older in the right environment, she has developed a sense of responsibility and is now a prefect at school and a leader at Girls and Boys Town.

It is amazing that she talks about her studies, school, educators and school mates. Her stay at Girls and Boys Town has changed us both! She is able to see that a bright future lies ahead of her and I have been relieved from the fear of the unknown. Even friends and family comment on the turnaround we have both shown. In my opinion, intervention is a prerequisite if intense challenges are experienced at home. I never saw the light until Laurie went to

Girls and Boys Town!

Teenage boy finds mom — 11 years later

Darren's parents were never married. They came from different backgrounds and their relationship did not continue after Darren's conception. He lived with his mother in a rural community until he was five, when his father suddenly reappeared and took him away.

For the next 11 years Darren was abused physically, sexually and emotionally at the hand of his father - the very person he should be expected to trust. They moved around constantly as a result of his father's unstable lifestyle, alcohol abuse and poor life choices. This also meant that Darren's mother lost all trace of him.

Darren finally found some help when his father rented a room from someone who became aware of the negligence, abuse and criminal activity. When Darren's father made him break into the landlady's home, she reported the abuse and the crimes to the SAPS and social services. And after 11 years, Darren finally found relief.

The Girls and Boys Town Family Services received an application for placement for Darren, now 16 years old and living in a temporary safe care. As part of the assessment process, the Family Service team tried to make contact with his mother and father. With no idea of his mother's location and constant misinformation from his father, they were pushed from pillar to post, leaving no answers for Darren.

It was only when they were eventually able to place an article in the local community newspaper

that Darren's uncle made contact. Our Family Service team passed on the information to the social worker who referred Darren for placement and she managed to make contact with the mom who had been looking for her son all these years!

After a life of abuse and misuse, Darren was hesitant to make contact with his mom, now a stranger to him. The Family Service team, determined to let Darren heal at his own pace and in a place where he felt safe, made the decision to place him in a Children's Home closer to his mother and school where he was doing well and had developed positive connections with his teachers.

Six months into his placement at the Children's Home, they informed us that Darren had reconnected with his mother, continues to thrive at school and is in the process of recovering from his past.

He is also building solid relationships with other family members. An older half-sister in another province has just sent him and his mom a plane ticket and they will be visiting her during the school holiday. Darren is now happy and has expressed his gratitude to Family Services for making it possible for him to reunite with the family he can trust.

It is results like this that make everything we do so worthwhile! Thank you to our Family Service team for providing the very best solutions for Darren as well as hope for children and their families — and helping them to Shine™.



The painstaking work of rebuilding a boy's self-esteem. This is Warren's story — as told by one of our Learning Support Centre staff ...

Even the bean I planted died.

When Warren first arrived with us, I asked him, What do you want out of life?

His response was: I want to be normal, like other people .

I then asked, What makes other people normal ?

He said, They can read and write, they are worth something, I am just nobody, I can't do anything right. Even the bean I planted died .

Needless to say my heart ached when I heard this.

Warren is a 15 year old youth from one of our six Family homes.

His full time journey with our Learning Support Centre began, this year in January, when he was expelled from his school.

A reading assessment, in mid January this year, showed that he was not able to read or write. In fact he did not even know the alphabet.

Aside from reading and writing, another area that needed a great deal of work was his poor self-esteem.



We set Warren a 10 week goal. The goal was to read a hundred of the most frequently used words in English by the end of the 10 weeks.

This goal he achieved in the allotted time.

This achievement has given his confidence and self-esteem such a huge boost that he smiles and laughs more often than he ever did before.

After 6 weeks he was already reading 7 pages on his own.

I then asked him, How do you feel now ?

His eyes shone with excitement as he said, I feel like I am someone too. I feel like I am worth something. I can read! Finally, I am normal too .

Warren's behaviour is still a work in progress. However his self-esteem has made a huge leap and he has a willingness to succeed and continue with the programme.

On arrival he was a timid young man with no courage. He would not ask for help from anyone. In front of his peers he acted as if he was not interested in working so that they would not know of his handicap .

Now he talks freely about his reading skills in front of the other boys. (The girls are still not allowed in on the secret).

He asks for help when necessary.

There has just been a complete transformation in his demeanour.

The same reading assessment that was done in January was done again recently. It showed that Warren's reading had improved by 18 months since January.

It is a huge privilege for us to be part of this growth process — as we help each youth to Shine™ — one step at a time.

Macassar sets school attendance record

Automatic acceptance of our youth into mainstream schools is not something we can take for granted.

17 boys at Macassar Campus started school on the first school day - with a further three still awaiting assessment and placement. This marks a tremendous first day considering that last year a far smaller percentage were able to attend school.



First day – all dressed up and ready to go!

combined 190 smartly covered books, arrive at school with their heads and spirits held high. It is also the encouragement, guidance and

support from the Girls and Boys Town staff and most certainly the willingness of these boys to succeed and work hard that got them through the school gates with a sense of pride and accomplishment.

ment.

We do not doubt that there is still a great deal of work ahead of us, but with the kind of teamwork Macassar Campus sports, anything is possible. So thank you to all the staff involved. This task will never be easy but always rewarding, especially at times like this.

The process of admission is often long and hard, and so the efforts and resources of our local Learning Support Centre were vital in achieving a record level of school admissions this year.°

All thanks to them, we saw a group of sharply dressed boys with their new school bags in tow, packed with stationery and a

BY ANY NAME, OUR GIRLS AND BOYS ARE REAL!

All the youth you will see in our newsletters are real Girls and Boys Town family! But as a measure of protecting their privacy, names are changed as a policy. We trust you will understand. Thank you.

A Worldly Chocolate Magical Hat

Red is love and yellow is the sun and green is for the grass. And the stars and dots are the thunder that help give rain. The topic of my hat is that life is uncertain because you never know what can happen in life?

The theme of my hat is that if I throw an apple in my hat then chocolate comes out of the hat and all the colours on my hat have its own special powers. All the powers that are special are equal to certain things we do in life. That is why we should not give up in life no matter what life gives you.

It's all about the decisions you make in life... **that is the magic in it!**

(This youth's task was to create a hat from cardboard — but the design and colours had to tell his audience a story. He first splash-painted a large piece of card — and only then cut the card to required shapes. Then he added more designs. Finally, he glued all the bits together and wrote his story.)