

Alumni News



Inspiring
Challenging
Learning
Discovering
Transforming

Supportive
Passionate
Caring
Understanding

Trustworthy
Reliable
Responsive
Experienced

Connecting
Sharing
Familial
Bonding

FEBRUARY 2016

Message from the Chairperson



Dear AFS Alumni,

First of all, apologies for losing contact with you! Over the years paper records have been lost in a fire and computer records lost catastrophically – which has left us putting together an alumni list from individuals' recollections. But we now have a list of 35 alumni from the 60s to the 90s and, hopefully with your help, that list can only grow.

AFS Interculture South Africa may be a much larger organisation than you remember; we have a Board of 6 members, chapters spread across 8 Regions with 208 Volunteers, and a National Office in Cresta, Johannesburg, with 11 staff members.

Apart from our newsletter, you may want to take a look at our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/AFSRSA Also online we have the AFS World Café, which unites the vast AFS community through a common online platform, that enables us all to connect in new and meaningful ways, share AFS experiences and resources, and finally, truly act as a global community.

Please contact us if you would like an invitation email for the World Café.

Those of you who have been out of contact with AFS may be surprised by how the organisation has changed. While our school programmes are still key to what we are, community service programmes began to be run in the 1980s and, since 2014, AFS has a subsidiary, Sentio, dedicated solely to 18+ programmes (you can find out more by following the link in the Contacts box).

Another difference is the focus on changemaking. AFS has been in partnership with Ashoka Youth Venture since 2012. This was initially aimed at providing training and support to exchange participants through a jointly developed "Dream It. Do It." curriculum, that enabled participants to create positive change in their communities on their return home. We now see changemaking as a key way in which AFS can work towards a more just and peaceful world. Again, you can find out more by following the link in the Contacts box.

Within South Africa we are planning to increase our volunteer numbers even more, so that each chapter becomes a hub for intercultural learning and changemaking in the community.

We would love for you to become involved in all of the exciting developments within AFS Interculture South Africa; whether that is by becoming involved in your local chapter, or through you bringing your own experience and contacts to help us spread the message and gain support.

If you would like to reconnect, please email either myself at palesa.ramatsepe@afs.org or our National Director at dennis.lane@afs.org

For the rest of this newsletter, we would like to share some articles from recent volunteer newsletters, to give you a flavour of what is happening within South Africa.

Hoping to hear from you soon!

Regards

Palesa Ramatsepe

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CONTACTS

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AFS ISA Changemaking:

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(November 2015)**AFS Visible in ‘Kasi’ schools**

The very first school relations outreach of the new Mamelodi Chapter saw the successful hosting of the 3 IPscNH15 participants at Mamelodi High and Modiri Technical High schools, from July to Sept.



The principals and their staff continued to ensure that participants got the best out of a typical township school. The vibe of intercultural learning experiences continued to flourish as students got to know about AFS for the first time.

They made the best out of this unique international encounter. There were mixed feelings of joy and sadness as Mamelodi High School bid farewell to their 2 students Clemens (Thabo) and Zimon (Nathi) on the 4th September 2015.



Students, staff and AFS volunteers went out of their way to make this surprise event a memorable occasion for the participants as they were showered with souvenirs, lots of love, food and refreshments.

(July 2015)**Sawa Sawa Pedi**

AFS Interculture South Africa ran a 12-day pilot programme (the second of four) as part of the Sawa Sawa programme across the four AFS partners in Africa.

It was designed as an introduction to changemaking for volunteers, and ran from Monday 16th March to Friday 27th March. There were 14 participants in total, 12 African volunteers (3 from Egypt, 1 from Kenya, 4 from South Africa, and 4 from Ghana), 1 German volunteer and 1 Swiss volunteer.

The aim of including European volunteers was to give key partners the chance to see what could possibly be on offer in the future, and to assess the feasibility of running a programme wider than just Africa.

The aims of the programme were to promote regional integration, encourage changemaking, and to link both of these to AFS's statement of purpose "to create a more just and peaceful world".

There were three streams of content throughout the 12-day programme:

1. Changemaking – Basic changemaking theory, plus each country group developed a changemaking project to implement on their return home.

2. Development Issues – Language, Youth Issues, Gender Issues – The issues were raised through visits to local organisations (e.g. Kliptown Youth Centre, Sonke Gender Justice etc.) but also looked at common issues across countries.

3. A more just and peaceful world – Human Origins, Freedom and Democracy, Regional Integration, Migration and Xenophobia, An Empowering Constitution – This was introduced through a variety of visits (e.g. Walter Sisulu Museum, Apartheid Museum, Maropeng Cradle of Humankind etc.) and, again, we looked at things from a South African perspective and related this to the situations in the other countries.)

Participants stayed with host families in South African communities and were given

the opportunity to explore those communities throughout the programme.

The general feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with all participants saying that they would recommend others to participate.

A massive thank you to everyone (host families, volunteers and staff) who worked so hard to make this work!

(Dec 2014)**Having Fun!**

Thoko and some of her chapter members had a great day out with participants on the Soweto tour.

**Soweto Tour**

The Pietermaritzburg Chapter recently enjoyed a spring picnic in Bisley Valley attended by students and past, present and future host families.

**Bisley Valley Picnic****Training Has Also Been Fun**

Training sessions are being held in the different parts of the country. To date we have had some really successful and rewarding sessions. We had the privilege of having Gaia, the Italian Chaperone, join us and share her knowledge and expertise at some of our sessions. Chapters have been putting together Action Plans, gaining knowledge on how to create awareness about AFS and what is required to improve our service and quality to all our "clients". Who are our "clients"? - partner countries, host families, participants, schools, community organisations and volunteers.

If there are any specific areas you or your chapter would like training on please contact the national office.



Training in Phalaborwa

Stories of Change

Since its beginning, AFS has been a vehicle for committed individuals who dare to make a difference. Courage, volunteerism and learning have been constants throughout our history. A century ago they resulted in thousands of lives saved. Then, in inventing the intercultural exchange programmes that still transform lives today.

Creating change is what AFSers do, and we call it the **AFS Effect**.

Change can come in many forms and we are now sharing examples on the website. One of those is Jannis Drixler, a 27 year old participant from Germany, placed at Nkosi's Haven. Here he tells us how he learned that change has to be owned by those involved.



Children at Nkosi's Haven working on the goalposts

Learning to Appreciate Things

When I arrived at Nkosi's Haven I soon realized that the kids here didn't really appreciate all the toys and sports

equipment that was given to them. They broke most of the stuff within days or even hours. Building wooden soccer poles with them let them appreciate the value of things and their own work.

I was placed in Nkosi's Haven in Johannesburg; a project taking care of HIV infected mothers and their children. The project is pretty well known in South Africa which is why we get a lot of donations especially in the form of toys and sports equipment. I spend a lot of time playing with the kids and I soon realized that they didn't really appreciate all the toys and sports equipment that was given to them. Especially the older boys, between the ages of 12 and 18, who would sometimes break three or four soccer balls a day and they broke the new soccer poles the same day they were handed out to them. The manager didn't know what to do with the kids anymore since banning them from the soccer field would only result in them coming up with other ways of "entertaining" themselves which usually resulted in them breaking something else.

One day, when one of our cottages at the haven was refurbished, I saw these big wooden poles lying around that the workers didn't seem to need any more. That's when I came up with the idea to build soccer poles with the boys, since I felt like the boys would not be able to break these poles and maybe they would take better care of them if they built them themselves.

So I organized all the equipment and tools we needed to build the poles; like screws, saws, hammers, drilling machine and so on, and we started building the poles the week after. To my surprise all the boys, even the smallest ones, were willing to help and I was busy finding tasks for every single one of them to make sure that nobody felt left out. Even though it was a bit chaotic and at the end the poles were not as "perfect" as I would have liked them to be; considering that most of the kids had never really used tools like saws and hammers before, I was very happy with what we accomplished and I felt like the kids were happy and proud as well.

It seems like my idea of raising the kids awareness for the value of things has worked. It has been 3 months since we built the poles and they are still standing. Every single one of the kids takes care of them and lectures others if they have the feeling that they are not taking proper care of the poles by climbing on them or the like.

I learned that things or objects you have worked on yourself, and that you have put a lot of effort into, can be way more valuable than things you just buy in some shop. In my opinion it was also an important lesson for the kids; and by letting them be a part of the building process of the poles they understood and learned to appreciate the things they have. I think building the poles themselves gave them a feeling of "this is ours" instead of "this is property of Nkosi's Haven" which is why they were way more appreciative.

I have already thought of other things I can build with the kids. As soon as I find the proper parts and equipment I will try to start building soap box racers with the kids and will once again try to get as many kids as possible involved in the building process.