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Connecting
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Bonding

AFS Interculture South Africa News

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IN THIS ISSUE

Message from the Chairperson



Dear RSA Volunteers and Staff

Season's Greetings to all, I would like to thank all of you for your continued support and hard work in making AFS RSA stand, your sacrifices, contributions and commitment are highly appreciated. I am honoured to lead the Board of AFS RSA as a new Chairperson and believe that together we can do more in promoting a more just and peaceful society through Intercultural learning. These are the values that attracted me to this organisation 6 years ago. I started my AFS experience in Emalaheni as an all-rounder Volunteer in the Chapter, therefore I can identify with some of the challenges on the ground. I was voted in as a Board Member in May 2012 and it has been the most fulfilling experience for me; therefore I will continue with my commitment and passion to AFS and its mission.

I hope to engage more with you in the near future on a more personal basis and through this space as well.

The Board:

Following our May 2014 AGA, the Board composition is currently as follows:

Mr Bongani Khumalo – Board Member – **Media and Communication** and **Interim President Africa Group** (Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Tunisia and Egypt)

Mr Dennis Lane – National Director (Ex Officio)

Mr Dennis Setshedi – Vice Chairperson of the Board – **Programmes**

Mrs Mary Mlambo – Board Member – **Quality**

Ms Palesa Ramatsepe – Chairperson of the Board – **Change Making**

Ms Phokwane Moloele (CA SA) – Board Member – **Finance and Fundraising**

Mrs Wendy Svendsen – Board Member – **Volunteer Development**

The Board is confident that with your continued support increasing our impact and effecting change in our immediate communities, country and continent is inevitable. I therefore encourage you to check the new Strategic Direction document compiled by our National Director on the website to make sure that we are all on the same page in terms of our goals and objectives. Your suggestions and contributions are welcome.

May I take this opportunity to wish you and your loved ones a Blessed Festive Season.

Regards

Palesa Ramatsepe

Message from the Chairperson

Good News!!

Hi and Goodbye

Birthdays

Visibility Makes a Difference

Having Fun!

Centennial Celebrations

Training Has Also Been Fun

Welcome Home 2013 YES Participants

Chapter Meetings

Stories of Change



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Good News!!

Well done volunteers and national office staff. Thank you everybody (to all of you) for a job well done.

South Africa managed to have “on time” placements for all our IP Students that arrived in July AND, although we just missed the “internal on time” deadline by a few days, we still managed to make the “International on-time” placement for our students arriving in September.

We look forward to receiving regular stories from our host families and students from around South Africa.

Do YOU think we can make it three in a row? You bet we can, all it will take is for each chapter to find **two** host families – it will be really fantastic if, by the time Christmas comes, we have enough host family applications waiting for the students due to arrive at the end of February 2015. Which chapters out there are prepared to take up the challenge? Thank you in advance, each little step we take is working towards getting SA into the top 10 AFS Partner countries. However, of greater importance is that we will be allowing more young people and families to live the experience of “Learning to Live Together” and playing their part in helping to make our world a more just and peaceful place.

Hi and Goodbye

We had the joy of receiving 42 Intensive Programme (IP) students from Italy, Spain, Germany and France who arrived in SA in July 2014. They came to spend their Summer Holiday with a South African Family and experience being a student in a South African School. Time goes so quickly before we knew it September had arrived and sadly goodbyes had to be said. Having had the opportunity to meet quite a number of the participants and hear first-hand about their South African experiences, it would be good to share some of these stories. **Thank you to all the host families, schools and volunteers who ensured that these experiences were possible.**



IP Departure Orientation in Pietermaritzburg

July/August also saw us saying goodbye to our 18+ Community Service Participants who spent between 6 and 11 months providing valuable help, skills and support to many and varied projects around South Africa. Thank you to all of you.

Happily we welcomed our new group of Community Service Participants who arrived during August and September. We look forward to having you share your South African stories and experiences with us during the course of your stay.

Birthdays

Does your chapter have a birthday list?

If the answer is yes, please forward the names and dates of those volunteers and participants having birthdays during the next 2 months, so that we can also wish them a happy birthday. To all who have had birthdays during the last few months we hope you had a wonderful day and wish you lots of joy and happiness during the year ahead.

Visibility Makes a Difference

The more visible we are, the more likely we are to attract volunteers and host families. Remember to share our newsletter, put it on the school notice board or a Community Notice Board – wherever people can see it. Get articles into your local papers, wear your AFS t-shirts and now we have a lovely AFS/YES Hoody to add to our collection that was launched at the 2014/2015 YES Gateway Departure Orientation. If you would like to be the proud owner of one, they can be purchased from the national office through your chapter. Prices range between R342 and R394 depending on the size.



National Director, Dennis Lane, modelling his hoody during a visit to the UK

Having Fun!

AFS is about having fun – Look what our chapters have been up to!

Mossel Bay Participants, Host Families and Volunteers had a wonderful day out enjoying a game drive and sharing a mouth-watering lunch. I wonder who saw the most animals!

At the training session held in Mossel Bay those in attendance drew up an action plan for their chapter. The good news is they have already worked hard on achieving some of their goals. They have started their Facebook page and their WhatsApp Group is hard at work.

They also decided to give their students a send-off



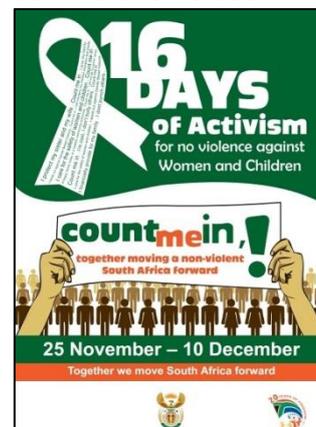
Mossel Bay Student Send-off

Phalaborwa had a fun-filled evening shared with teachers, host families, participants and their friends at their farewell function. What a positive way of creating awareness and giving people the opportunity to share experiences and become more involved with AFS. **Well done Phalaborwa Team.**

At the training session held in Phalaborwa three new volunteers were welcomed. We look forward to a long and successful association.



Phalaborwa Farewell Function



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

What has your chapter been doing? Please share with us.

Centennial Celebrations



Palesa, Bongani, and Dennis presenting a model AFS ambulance to AFS France

The launch of the year-long celebrations of the AFS Centennial took place in Paris in November. We can now all go ahead and celebrate in our own way. How about a champagne breakfast to celebrate the occasion - invite the Principal and some of your teachers to share in the experience – propose a toast to those amazing ambulance men and women of the 1st and 2nd World Wars. Perhaps you could use the

function to launch a Community Involvement Project for your chapter to start and be involved with. Maybe a braai, maybe a “food around the world” tasting evening - use your imagination, just have a great time. For more about the amazing history of our organisation, please take a look at the timeline on the website.

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

Welcome Home 2013 YES Participants

We welcomed home our YES students at the end of June and then said goodbye to our 2014 departing YES students who had the opportunity of speaking to the returnees to get first-hand guidance and information from them when they all attended the Gateway and Re-entry Orientations at the same time at the same venue.

With the arrival of our new YP participants it would be wonderful if trained contact persons within the chapters would use this opportunity to mentor a recent returnee as a Contact Person.

The closing date for 2014/2015 YES applications has come and gone. Did you share this amazing opportunity with all your local schools? Did you spread the word that there is an amazing opportunity for 14 young people to spend 11 months in the USA from August 2015? Mary's Western Cape Region held an information session to

which teachers and interested pupils were invited in order to ensure the message went out. Ursula in Mossel Bay did a similar presentation. Well done.



Western Cape Training and YES Programme Information Session

If you missed the opportunity to share this amazing opportunity with your schools this year, be sure that you are on board for the next cycle of YES Scholarship opportunities.

Chapter Meetings

Does your chapter hold regular meetings? Johannesburg Northwest holds a regular chapter meeting on the third Tuesday of every month.

Did your chapter meet the challenge and introduce 1 new chapter member in the last 2 months? Has your chapter found a member who wants to be the “Champion of Quality” and another member who would like to champion volunteer development? For those who are confused, it won't be for long, once you have had a training session all will be clear! Please provide the relevant information Wendy at wendy.svensden@gmail.com or call on her on 082 496 8973.



Johannesburg Northwest Chapter Meeting

Two thoughts that may enthuse you about taking your chapter forward:

What we need is more people who specialize in the impossible – **Theodore Roosevelt**

The world hates change BUT it's the only thing that brings progress – **George Kettering**

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.

Do YOU have a story of how AFS has helped to create change?

If so, please download the Stories of Change Template from the website and share it with us!



Connecting Lives, Sharing Cultures