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THE UTHANDO PROJECT *Newsletter*

MARCH 2010 UTHANDO PROJECT NEWSLETTER

Hello dear dollmakers and Uthando friends,

The long, hot summer has quietly brought us to the March equinox, although our huge storm shook us up a bit. Just as quietly dolls arrive, appear and continue to astonish us, ready for sorting out for packing.

It is with steadiness of purpose, being undeterred by heat, that we have 1200 dolls (including 80 of the smaller Home Families) ready to go.

Usually we send them in economical batches of 2200 – 2500 dolls to TREE in Durban.

So NOW is the time for us to call in many more dolls by

Friday 23rd April.

Please deliver/post to
2 Healey Place, Gooseberry Hill WA
6076,

with your name and contact details. Our Dollmaker communicator, Georgina Noble, will happily send you an acknowledgment card if she has the details.

Here is a portrait photo of Pinky Majola from Dlalanathi in Pietermaritzburg, KZN. Read more about her December visit to Perth a bit further on. Pinky represents the commitment by many young Zulu people to a better future for South Africa's children. As a psychologist she is a trainer for the seniors and teenagers.



HOME FAMILIES for TREE's Family Play Facilitators.

It is really satisfying to see the wrapped up bundles of Home Families accumulating. Each bundle has an adult doll (granny, mum or dad), 2 children, a baby with wrap, an animal and a child's wrap for playing with a doll tied on the back. This is the smaller "Family" which the TREE Family Play Facilitator can leave with the family for play between visits. (Play mats at least one metre square, can be rectangular, child wrap 80 – 100cms x 30, baby wrap, 50 x 30.)

The power and generosity of our “grass roots” connections revealed itself when, in the November newsletter, a call went out for measured pieces of fabric to suit various playmats, child wraps, baby doll wraps . Well, they flooded in beautifully. However we have enough for now and the focus needs to be on actual dolls coming in.

As an aside, it is very touching to see among the donated materials that most sewing women have unfinished projects, usually a dress or track pants cut out, but somehow didn't quite make it to the wearable stage. It speaks of the ups and downs of our creativity and often that the needs of others in the family come first. Then the good intentions of something for ourselves founders. With these pieces comes new lease of life in being cut up to go into our very POPULAR dollmaking KITS.

DOLLMAKING KITS

These Uthando Dollmaking kits are doing a great job. Because they contain everything needed to make a doll, many organisations and schools are buying them.

We can always use donations of more “hospital scissors”, ribbons, braids, lace, buttons and beads with large holes. A huge acknowledgement goes to the Friday team in Gooseberry Hill who patiently cut up literally hundreds of things, tiny and large, to pack into the kits, not to mention endlessly winding red, white, black and brown thread on to cardboard. The fact that we do it together with good talk and delicious food makes this core group a Uthando community.

The kits give encouragement for those learning sewing, school holidays or just needing a start. They are a way of letting people know about Uthando's purpose and creating direct results, whether for children in KwaZulu-Natal or children anywhere.

During the last weekend Iris Whitelock and Vivienne Cane presented Uthando at an Environmental Fair in Rockingham. Good contacts were made with local schools, dolls were dressed with socks cut up imaginatively and lots of kits were sold. Similarly Lynne Jones presented Uthando through sales and display at a Rotary Conference held in Mandurah. Big cheers to these goodly independent women and their helpers.

Each kit sells for \$5, which over time accumulates into a very useful income for our funding pledge to Dlanathi in Pietermaritzburg. There, the funds are applied to their Training Sector. Trainers, community leaders and organisations are partnered, usually over two years, with the focus on arousing sensitive awareness with children through play. We can all see that the devastating effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic leave no one untouched. Our dolls are a practical expression of our love for all children, and our money is a valuable expression of supporting the strategic “human” work there. I write “there”, when we could just as easily say “here”.

PARTNERING ORGANISATIONS

In KwaZulu-Natal

The types of organisations we send dolls to in KZN are all concerned with children's emotional happiness and balanced development. Dolls go initially to TREE, (Training and Resources in Early Education) in Durban, where the individual dolls, the Doll Families and the smaller Home Families are distributed through their trainees and TREE's network. From there to Dlananathi in Pietermaritzburg. (Dlananathi originally was named the Rob Smetherham Bereavement Service for Children). Many of the story telling dolls and the hand puppets go to Dlananathi as they encourage spontaneous conversation between children and with adults. Appropriate dolls also go to children cared for by the Cerebral Palsy Assoc, to children who have been abused and raped, children with special needs. Four doll families were taken home by Snoeks Desmond who promotes Family Literacy. These families now have their new homes in Community Library Centres, where whole families, especially adult women, are empowered to read and write, with the growing revelation that their "story" matters and that they are an asset to their communities.

In Western Australia

I have just had a cuppa out in the cool garden, which gave me time to reflect more on our project. This newsletter is one of those "business as usual" newsletters which stand on the basis of firm accomplishments over four and half years, and where one can feel poised for an opening up of action. There is a definite magnetism pulling us, calling us, encouraging us to work with indigenous and refugee (often African) women, children and families. We are always open to ideas and meeting with community leaders to further this.

If we see the 2009 workshops with Rachel and Sibongile (from Dlananathi) as throwing the pebble in the pond, then the direct results are circling out already to many communities working with children in WA. Continued partnerships are with Meerilinga (Promoting Positive Childhoods) with women adjusting to motherhood and with young women training to work in early childhood professions, Djooraminda organisation where indigenous "new families" are created with Aboriginal house mothers, Polytech West for girls and women studying to enter early childhood educational support, many primary and secondary schools, including rural areas, Girl Guides, Church fellowships groups, Seniors groups. Rotary, Probus and especially Soroptimist International. (I apologise here for the funny editing incursions. I can't fix them!!!)

Lynne Tognolini (Schools Liaison person) proudly reports on the higher quality of school dolls. Please imagine the difference it makes to a school's ethos, the staff collaboration, the involvement of parents and family members and the excited dedication of the young dollmakers when they take on the Uthando project in the class rooms. Practical sewing skills are learned, which many children would miss out on altogether, plus the recycling of materials. Above all is the generous spirit in which the children part with their treasured creations.

PINKY'S VISIT IN December 2009

Our dear, sparkly Zulu friend from the Dlananathi staff, Pinky Majola, had the "holiday of a lifetime" in Perth. Isabella Cowin, who had met Pinky on our last Uthando workshop visit to KZN, expressed her appreciation and love for Pinky by paying for her whole holiday here. We held two Uthando events in Gooseberry Hill so that Pinky could give us an insider's view of life in KZN. She held us spellbound, especially in describing the steady, slow development of working with the grandmothers and their brilliant responses to the Dlananathi gentle ways of

working with children. Wherever Pinky went here, people were attracted to talking with her. What a beautiful ambassador! Thank you Pinky, and thank you Isabella.

ART AUCTION MAY17th 2010

Susan Saleeba invites all interested to come to an art auction as a fund raiser to buy land for a school for an orphanage in Kenya. The auction will be at the Gadfly Gallery, Waratah Ave , Dalkeith, May 17 at 7.30 pm. Susan, who is passionate about this project, is introduced to Uthando through Joan Halsall, who gives hand and heart to many parts of the world. Please see Susan's website www.kenya.net.au for The Nakuru, Kenya Family project. It is connecting like this that a network results of likeminded projects. Our joint actions are strengthened and more light is shone on Africa.

Three of the donated art works will benefit both Uthando and Nakuru.

THOUGHTFUL SCHOOL REPORT

Before closing, here is a delightful, abridged report from Gina Russo-Forcina, the Community Service Coordinator at the Cyril Jackson Senior Education Support Centre. Please notice all the inter-relationships which underlie the dollmaking.

“Using felt material which they cut out from a pattern, followed by hand sewing around the edges to make the doll, each student worked on their own doll by hand, and beaded a necklace too. Some students plaited thick wool to make hair. The fabric used to make the clothing was donated by the staff and the patterns used came from the Uthando website. We had our own School Psychologist join in on the sessions and students enjoyed making the dolls knowing it was for a worthy cause. We had a dear lady volunteer her time to knit some of the clothing for the dolls. The Uthando Project has taken up the first semester to completely finish making the dolls. The students had a fun time. This project also involved teaching staff who helped.”

WHAT CAN I DO?

Any of us can promote Uthando's work independently. Please talk with your local schools, senior's groups, etc about making dolls.

The core team can provide posters, “ambassador” dolls, marketing materials, (pattern posters, kits, cards, DVD).

Call Georgia 9293 2363 if you have an event where you would like to present Uthando.

Please send in the dolls,

Lots of love and appreciation to every dollmaker all around the world,
Georgia and the Team

2 HEALEY PLACE, GOOSEBERRY HILL, WA 6076
ph 08 9293 2363

DATABASE INFORMATION

Lis Hansen is doing valiant work to bring our data base up to date. There is not much we can do to correct the situation if we have faulty addresses. If you are getting more than one email, please let us know. It is possible that we have re-entered someone who has unsubscribed. If so please let us know. For anyone who wishes Not to receive our newsletters, click on Unsubscribe. We thank you for your past interest and support.

This email was sent to [email address suppressed]
Click here to *instantly* unsubscribe.

Uthando Project Website