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## THE UTHANDO PROJECT *Newsletter*

### May 2009

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Dear Dollmakers,

This will be a brief but very exciting newsletter as we are in the intense planning stage of holding two workshops in July which involves inviting psychologists Rachel Rozentals-Thresher, (CEO) and Sibongile Mhkize (staff) from the Rob Smetherham Bereavement Service for Children to come to Perth from Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Over the last two years, volunteer dollmakers have travelled to KwaZulu-Natal at their own expense to work in partnership with RobS and TREE, (Training and Resources in Early Education) for workshops with community leaders, other NGO's, carers and early childhood professionals. Uthando people pass on skills of dollmaking and RobS train the trainers about being with children enduring trauma, grief and loss during these tough times of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. RobS emphasizes the crucial contribution of play for the child and ways of deepening the interaction and communication with the carer. How do communities respond to such challenges?



Often people say; "Why do you travel to Africa for this work? There is much to be supported within our own communities here, especially where there is loss of culture or language, or disintegration of family, or difficulties for migrant and refugee families to adjust to. Just in all of us being human. How do we talk with children about sickness, death and dying?"

It seems as if the time has come for us to offer what we can to our local communities and to have the added blessing of the rich experiences of RobS.

### Two Workshops in Perth with RobS

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The workshop is entitled, "**Difficult Truths; being with children in times of stress, grief and loss**". It covers 3 days, 9 – 4.30pm and is followed by an Open Day for the public to see the dolls made in the workshop and an exhibition of our Uthando dolls, for children to dress our dolls, to see films on Africa and our own DVD and to have fun in a Knitathon and to meet Rachel and Sibongile.

The communities we think will benefit from the workshop may come from

**indigenous** communities, from **refugee**, **migrant** and other than English language communities. Suitable for those working with children in **foster care** or with children with **disabilities**, through schools or churches. Ideally, two representatives from each organisation would give mutual support.

#### EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST NEEDED NOW

Grief and loss is not always about death and dying. We grieve also our loss of culture or country or mother tongue or of feeling isolated in a new place.

Talking with children about loss or death is not easy in our society. How do we listen to children? A doll may provide a way to reach a child in need.

**The first workshop will be in the Masonic Hall, Fremantle, 1 – 3 July, Open Day 4<sup>th</sup> from 10 – 3pm.**

**The second workshop will be in the charming old TAFE or Opera Studio, now Midland Junction Arts Centre, Great Eastern Highway cnr Cale St, Midland, 8 – 10 July, Open Day 11th 10 – 3pm.**

What can I do to help? I hear you ask!!!!

- Invite community leaders who work with families and children from all backgrounds to register in the workshops. Please request the invitation to be sent to you or the potential participant. The Registration forms will follow expressions of interest. Please supply contact name, phone, email, etc of the organisation, department, community, church or school. Email; [georgia1@iinet.net.au](mailto:georgia1@iinet.net.au) or phone 9293 2363.
- Make lots of naked dolls (complete with face and hair) for the children to dress up. Make heaps of dolls' clothing which is designed for easy dressing, eg loose pants' legs and arms, for the Open Day. Deliver by June 30 or bring to either of the Open Days.
- Join in the Knitathon. Details are not confirmed. It might be for knitters to knit as much of a doll as possible, or lots of squares in a special time at the venue. We will specify size of needles and wool and provide the pattern. This is a glorious opportunity for knitters to be with many others who make such lovely dolls. Often we knit in isolation. Here is a chance to meet others and have some fun. We'll need some prizes donated as well, please.
- Come on Open Day, bring children and friends, see the films and meet Rachel and Sibongile. There will be a short presentation from them. Day's programme still being firmed up.
- Volunteer to help on Open Day in Midland, July 11 or to cook simple lunches for the workshop.
- There will be a poster project where hundreds of grandparents and grandchildren are photographed to celebrate NAIDOC Week. The theme is relationships between the young and old. If this fits you, please come on July 11, Midland. This project will be masterminded by Natalija Brunovs who filmed, edited and directed our DVD. See later.
- We need extra hands to prepare the dollmaking kits for other organisations and for the Open Days. If you can come to 2 Healey Place, Gooseberry Hill any Friday 10 - 4, (come and go as it suits you, bring a plate to share for lunch) it would be good to see you.
- Buttons, beads, ribbons, braid, etc are needed for these dollmaking kits. Please bring or send.

The Fremantle Branch of Soroptimists International (SI) under the leadership of Lynne Jones is managing the **Workshop One in Fremantle**. Uthando Project is immensely grateful for their solid partnership. We also have financial support from the City of Fremantle and especially from The WA AIDS Council who have agreed to print the workshop manuals and have invited Rachel and Sibongile to a special event.

For **Workshop Two in Midland**, the City of Swan represented by the Community

Development Arts and Culture Coordinator, Mallika Macleod is providing leadership, support, partnership and generous funding. It is inspirational to plan these workshops with people and organisations who can see the profound benefits. Our own communities are responding through steady registrations. The Open Days give us great opportunities to spread the dollmaking idea, whether for our local children of all cultures or for children in KZN. We have designed a more simple sewn doll, (with arms attached) which suits stretch fabric for strength and flexibility. This pattern is attached in two A4 pages and should be on our website soon. (I have added it to this newsletter, but goodness knows how it will show up within our programme! If impossible to work with, please email Georgia for it to be sent). It will be sent by post to those without email. Also in our workshop plans are posters of our classic patterns and one presenting the amazing animal knitted patterns of Kay Daw. These will be available during and after the Open Days.

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In writing this newsletter there is a mounting excitement of what we are heading towards, but also an awareness that our beloved dollmakers, who are scattered over Australia and the world, won't be able to participate in person in these Perth activities. Send us your loving support and keep on with making our Uthando dolls. Both Frances Soal (WA) and Nola Hawkins (Vic) have completed 200 dolls. Wow!

2009 has seen many presentations about Uthando work in an around Perth. These nearly always lead to more dolls being made. We have been given the greatest compliment through a sister organisation being formed in Malawi. Photographs have come in from a Scottish group in Loch Carron. More schools in the UK are contributing dolls. More individuals in USA too.

Sometimes Uthando also supports other organisations in Australia. We need lots of beads of all sorts, but with large holes for several people of very limited sight who are eager to make dolls' necklaces on hat elastic which can be then worn as bracelets by the children. Look through old jewellery and see what you can find.

## **Uthando DVD, "Goodness and Happiness, Sisters in KwaZulu-Natal"**

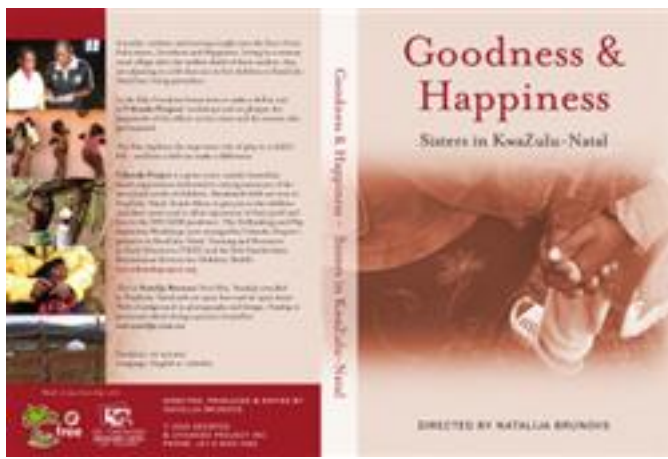
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*Goodness (Lungi) struggles with the hard daily work of her new rural life after having to leave her nursing training in Durban*



*Five dolls made with delight at our Centocow workshop in KZN by women who are Family Play Facilitators with TREE.*

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Finally, the launch of our **“Goodness and Happiness” DVD** was received enthusiastically and with tears at the International Women’s Day event, Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March in Perth. We sold out! Into our third pressing now. The film is 10 minutes long and will stimulate discussion for students and people of all ages. Goodness and Happiness are two Zulu sisters, in rural KZN, mourning the death of their mother, adjusting to a vastly different life and the effects of learning how to make a doll at a RobS – TREE – Uthando workshop in Centocow, KZN. Natalija Brunovs, with Dr Julie Stone, filmed and directed it. It is a clear labour of love, and we are very proud of it. Please email [billmack@comswest.net.au](mailto:billmack@comswest.net.au) to place your order. Please send a donation of \$10 each DVD plus \$2 postage per item. Bill will provide you with internet banking deposit details or cheque posting address. Give him your postal address.

## Families of dolls

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We know that your dolls are received with great joy by the children. We can’t get too many dolls. TREE requested that we put the dolls into family groups for their Family Play Facilitators to take to the remote families they visit. This has been received with great creativity. If you wish, design your own doll family and put them into a large bag eg 60 X 50 cms designed to be carried over long distances. What is a Family Group? This makes you truly think about what is a family for a child in South Africa. Usually we make a granny, a grandfather, an adult female and male, older boy and girl, a child and a baby. You could include a couple of soft knitted balls, an animal and a play sheet. Make it all lightweight as it has to be carried on foot over long distances. Again, family photos will be on our website.

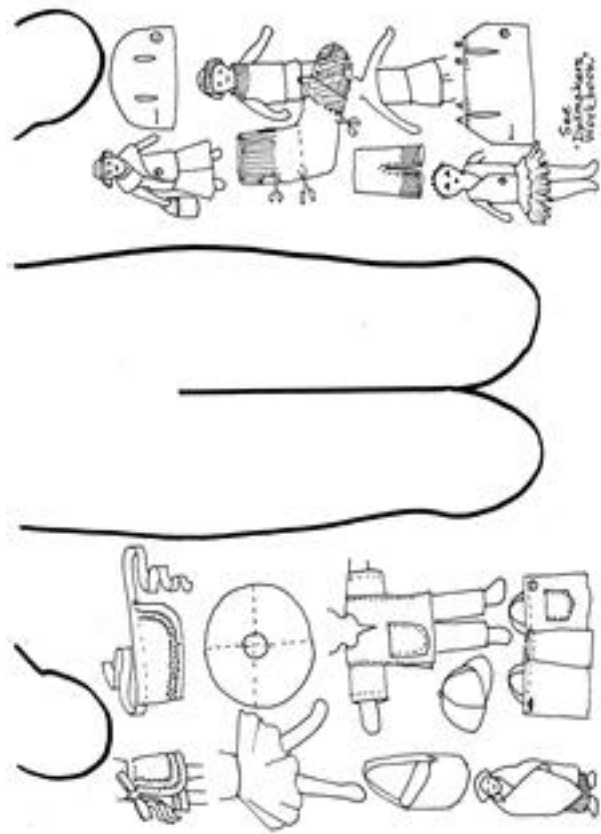
[www.uthandoproject.org](http://www.uthandoproject.org)

Thank you, thank you for being part of this engaging, valuable project,

Love, Georgia, Joy and the team

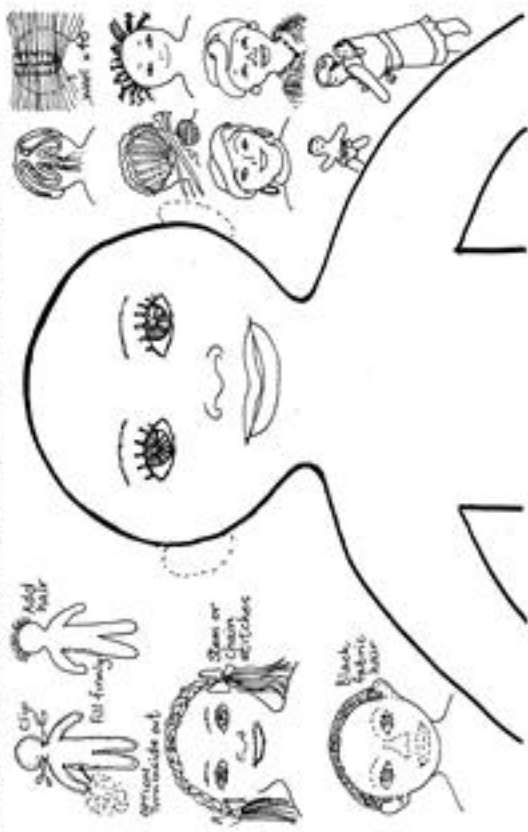
## Classic Uthando Sewn Doll

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**UTHANDO PROJECT Inc CLASSIC SEWN DOLL**

[www.uthandoproject.org](http://www.uthandoproject.org) Pattern may be enlarged or reduced with photocopier or computer.



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