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THE UTHANDO PROJECT *Newsletter*

UTHANDO PROJECT, Dolls for Zulu Children October 2007 Newsletter

Dear Dollmakers,

How marvellous to have such a lot to report to you. Apologies to those doll makers who have received this email twice. We have changed our email format and this was unavoidable this time.

Welcome to our new dollmakers subscribed through the website, www.uthandoproject.org

Also, welcome to knitters in Tasmania through the enthusiastic entry of Jessica Black and her good idea of a link to potential knitters through http://groups.yahoo.com/group/aussie_knitters/

For the first time we have had our hard copy newsletter, which is "snail mailed", designed and printed through the generosity of Di Blesing. Di came to the Auction and offered to do this huge work for us. The only cloud on the horizon is that we can't transfer Di's elegant design directly into this mode of sending to all our emailers. Please forgive my inelegancies in trying to include the photographs within the body of this email. It will improve. Scroll down and stick with it!

Gooseberry Hill students and dolls,dolls,dolls. Photo Barbara Mitchell

SCHOOLS

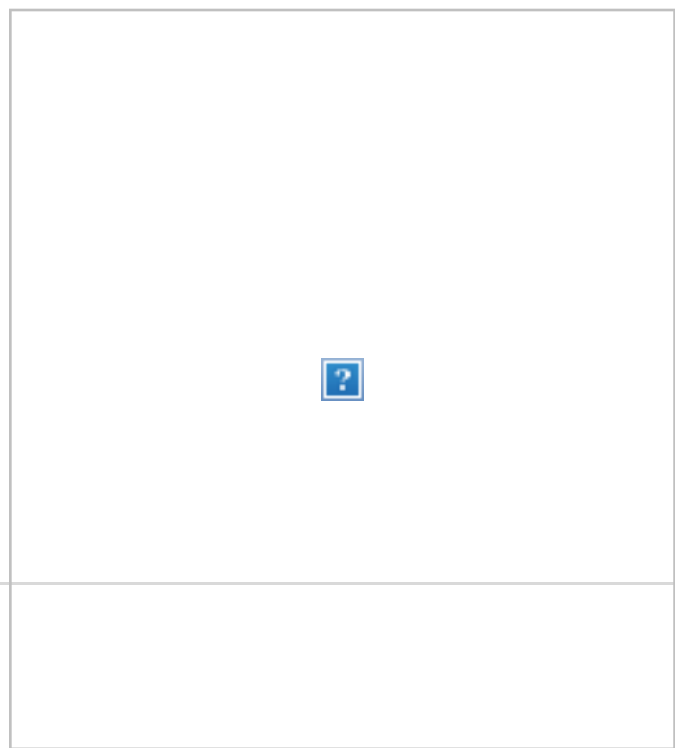
There are more new schools taking on dollmaking; Lancelin Primary School, Kalgoorlie Baptist College, Ardross Primary School and Broome Senior High School.

It is always a delight to see the individual dolls made by children FOR children. The improved strength of the dolls and the textile and sewing techniques get better and better.

A special thank you to the schools who displayed their dolls with panache at the September Auction. They are Beaconsfield Primary School, Spearwood Alternative Primary School, Kent St Senior High School, Perth College and Gooseberry Hill Primary School. Everyone loved seeing these bright dolls which result in hundreds more dolls for the Zulu children.

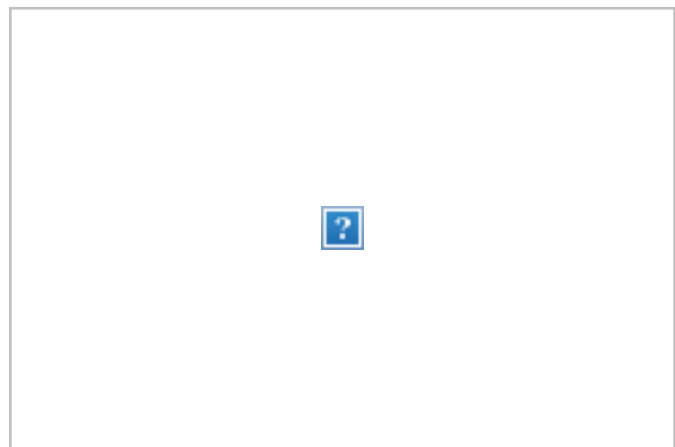
For their second year, we have more dolls from Toodyay Primary School and Maddington Primary School, (with a delicious CD of the children "at work"). Well done.

In two and a half hours we raised \$15,000 through the open and silent auctions, sale of African style dolls, sponsorship of dolls to go to Africa, donations at the door and sales of our brand new greeting cards which featured 10 dolls made by Western Australian artists and 10 Uthando dolls. More about these cards later in this newsletter. We had over 40 well-primed (with planning, not wine) dollmaker /artist/partners "work" like mad to get the whole venue set up between 12 and 2 pm. We did it!



Irene Gill, preparing her exotic African Velile for the auction.

The space looked exciting, abundant and exotic. The bids were somewhat disappointing, to the level where we need to re-think our public relations and fundraising strategy afresh for next year. Our wonderful auctioneer, Simon McGrath, even managed to get people to bid against themselves for a higher result.



Please, would everyone involved in this auction day give themselves a pat on the back for great accomplishment. Over 50 artists donated dolls, more than 200 special dolls were for sale, over 150 dolls tweaked up for sponsorship and five schools displayed their dolls.

This shows how truly "grass roots" we are as it takes hundreds of people to produce and conduct such a doll symphony.

Since then, more than \$1000 has come in, especially through the generosity of travellers on safari with Compass Odyssey who carry (free) bags of dolls with them for distribution to the children in 6 creches near St Lucia in KwaZulu-Natal. This initiative of directors Kate Hassell and Darryn Humphrys has been planned with our partners there, TREE (Training and Resources in Early Education) who have trained the women running these pre-primary centres.

Photo of two Zulu girls with their dolls, brought to them by Compass Odyssey. Photo; Kate Hassell

Taz at TREE admin. in Durban, emailed to say that more dolls had arrived from Clare Marley's group at the Hampstead Heath Unitarian Chapel. There's an engaging photo of the dolls swinging from an ecclesiastical chair. You'll have to use your imagination as I don't have the photo to include here. Sorry.

Our greatest piece of news is that, with funds raised at the auction, the Rob Smetherham

1. Edward with the doll he made for his teacher in Kalgoorlie

2. Natalie, Kalgoorlie, checking out the hair movement of her doll



In Kalgoorlie, (600kms east of Perth) Sue Gebbie, Judy MacIntosh, Georgina Noble and myself travelled by train to set up workshops in the Wongutha Birni Cultural Centre. We absorbed much about the hardships, (especially around health management) encountered by aboriginal women, we giggled with the children and were bowled over by their generosity in giving their dolls away. One teenage boy, Edward, designed his doll for his teacher, who was so excited that now the whole class will make dolls. An aboriginal girl made a very glamorous pregnant doll to go to KZN....with hip length white hair. Country hospitality shone over us and we look forward to hearing from the beautiful coordinator, Ruth Monck and her colleagues about the dolls that will be made in schools, homes and churches.

1. Lisa, staff of SJOG in Derby. Her sewing is exquisite.



The next episode was up to the far north of Western Australia, to the Kimberley region.

There is a far seeing project focussing on Aboriginal health led by the St John of God Health Care national administration and field workers. This project is called "Strong Women, Strong Babies, Strong Culture". So, with the guidance of Arlene Manado in Broome, I was able to introduce the Uthando Project to the SJOG centres in Derby and Fitzroy Crossing. Despite the alarming crisis of alcohol usage and domestic violence exposed through the press, my experiences there were tempered by the kindness and orderliness of the Women's Resource Centres where the dollmaking workshops were held. Personal tragedies lay close to the surface for all the women and children. Making dolls proved to be a pathway through to self expression, accomplishment (even the little ones could sew a baby doll) and laughter at our quaint first goes of designing our own dolls. In each town there were women with admirable sewing skills, and some for whom sewing is a novel event. I have just heard from Arlene that she returns to Fitzroy Crossing (400kms from

Broome) in late October to work with Helen Thomas taking the dollmaking further. Taking the dollmaking workshops to communities where facing each day may take courage or where the human spirit is dampened – has great far-reaching potential.

I feel that the workshops have been very short in time. We needed a “Strong Woman” in each centre, and that is what we have found. We have made use of a smaller doll pattern (A4 size) so that different techniques are covered in one day. Please ask for this pattern if you have a doll workshop in mind. The valuable opportunity that occurs along side the sewing, is taking the conversation to “play”, how to design the doll for expressive play and to ways of “listening to the child”. Arlene worded it as **“Listen to the child with your heart”**.

It was fabulous to hear the women explore the idea of creating dolls and their clothing through using bush dyes and materials, using local cotton as filling, etc. We are really in the business of empowerment of women and children through compassion, creativity and skills. Sometimes our work may lead some women to prospects for income generation.

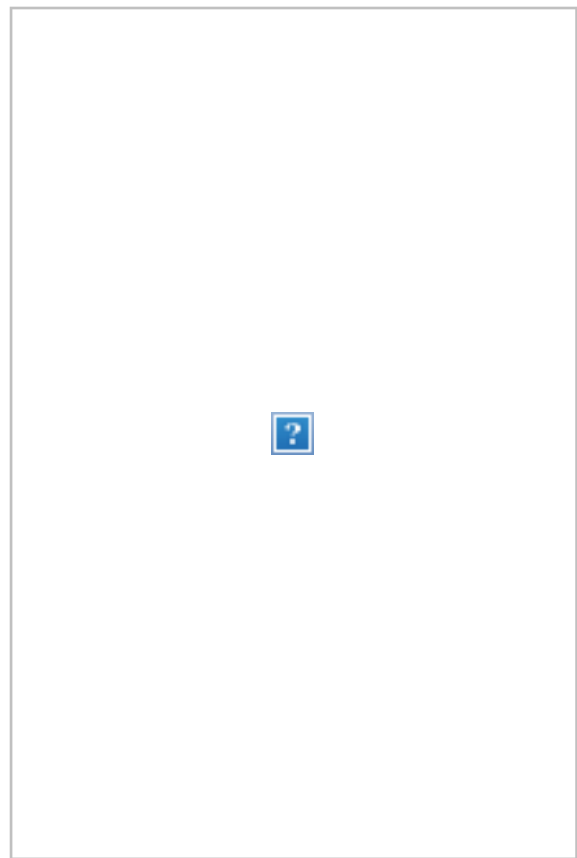


Photo above 2. Helen Thomas, Area manager for Fitzroy Crossing SJOG health programmes

If we go back to April this year in KZN when Julie, Irene and I partnered RobS in workshops in KZN with over 50 Zulu women, especially grandmothers, we have since learned from Rachel that those women have taught dollmaking to at least another 140 women and over 200 dolls have been made... over two months.

Note the PSS cluster is the group of organisations with its focus on Psycho-Social work within CINDI (Children in Distress Network). Rachel emailed in September. She is reviewing our Uthando and RobS workshops

"At the PSS Cluster meeting this morning I gave a short 15 minute presentation about the whole project from its inception to review of the feedback. A few final touches and the report will be emailed to you ALL as well in time for your meeting this weekend.

The presentation began with laughter and ended with tears as the group were very moved by the power of the process and the implementation by those trained. I read a few extracts from your beautiful letters Julie, and told a story of a caregiver who found the courage through the process to have a conversation with her 6 year old grandson who lost his parents when he was 2. The grandmother and the family had not until this point found the right time to tell him about the loss of his parents and how he came to be with his current family. The training gave her the opportunity to reflect on her grandson's feeling and experience and that helped her overcome the fear of telling him. The story brought the feedback workshop to tears and similarly in the presentation today.

I was again touched by the immense privilege we have to encounter such precious women and children and walk with them a little while along the difficult journey of loss.

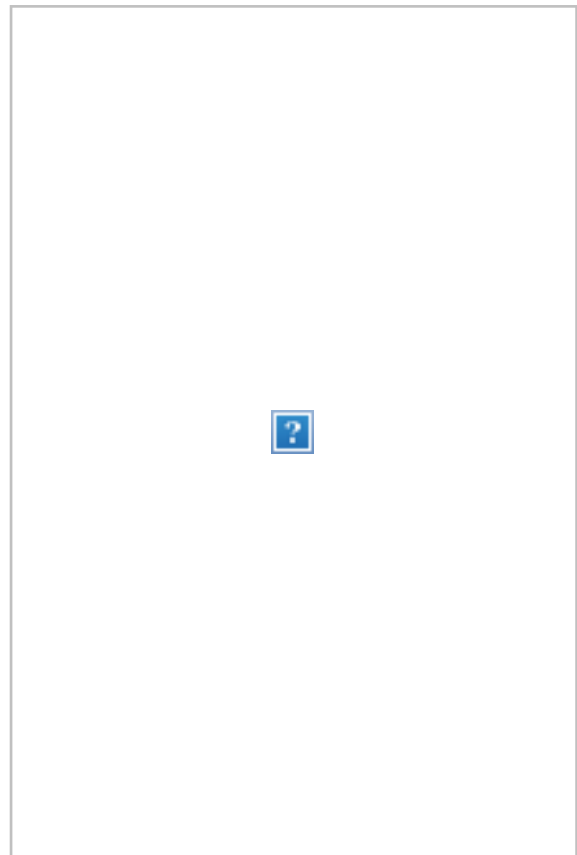
It has been a real pleasure to work with your openness, energy and love. I feel so close to the work as I have been preparing the report. This is such important and powerful work, thanks for your support. I am greatly humbled by the feedback which truly shows that the training as you had hoped and wished 'opened a world of possibility' for children and caregivers alike." Rachel

There is another area for the doll's work. This is in our prisons. Judy MackIntosh has generously offered to take this on. She reports here.

Report on a visit to a dollmaking session in 2nd October 2007 to a Perth Women's Prison

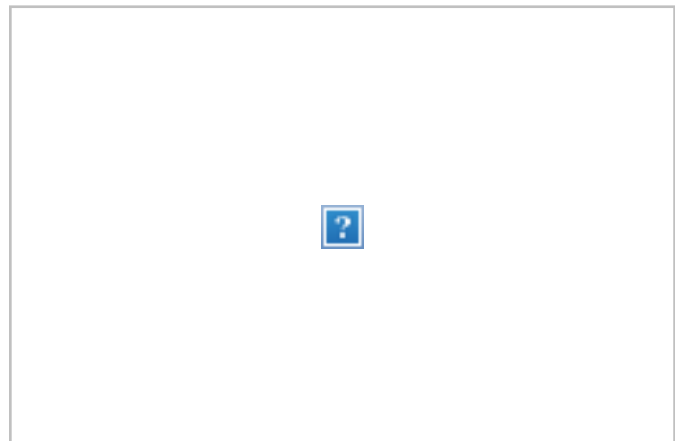
"Vasanti Sunderland invited a member of the Uthando Team (Judy) to visit a group of women who were making dolls for Zulu children. The program she undertakes with the women has the aim of demonstrating their willingness to help others. After completing steps of gaining entry, Judy visited a class of 12 women. The dolls were made in previous sessions and on the day, hair, faces and clothes were begun. All dolls were at different stages depending on their skills of the makers. Evident in the room was everyone's interest in the African children and their plight. Many women were learning new skills eg knitting, different sewing stitches, designing clothes for their doll and the exciting ways of using the variety of fabrics, beads and ribbons that were available. The keenness and sincerity of the dollmakers was displayed.

A special thank you to Vasanti for all her hard work and organisation in bringing the Uthando Project to the women. Judy would hope to be able to assist so that other groups in prison could be involved in the doll making. "



At last the CARDS.

The Greeting cards (blank inside) were a great success at the auction. We plan to have the next printing be of 2000 cards all featuring our Uthando dolls. They aren't on the website yet, but trust me, they look fantastic. These scattered photos of our African dolls are from the original professional photos, kindly donated by Geoff Fisher, www.fisherphotography.com.au. Geoff gave us hours of his time to achieve beautiful results. The design of the cards is in a square format, with gold, silver and opal envelopes.



They can be ordered as one pack of 10 different cards with envelopes for \$25, 2 packs for \$40, plus postage and packing \$4.50.

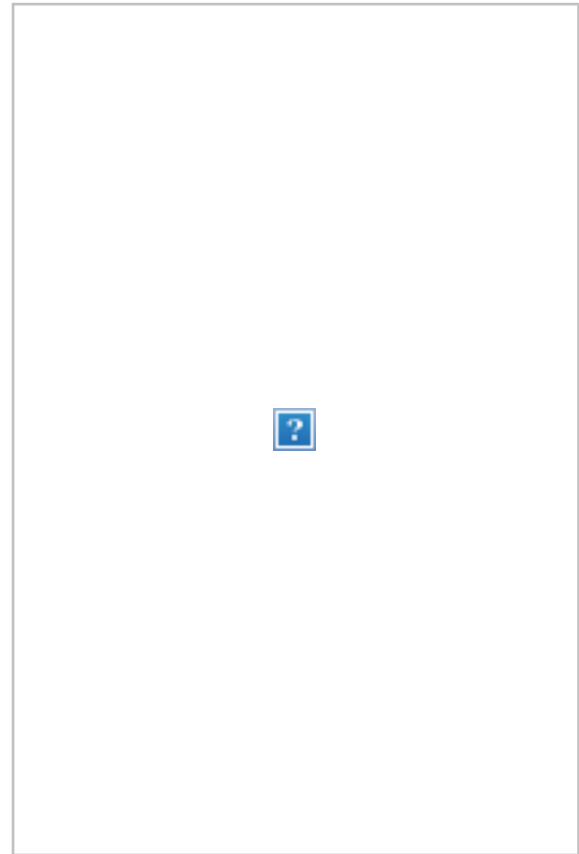
Please order them by phoning Georgia 9293 2363 or email georgia1@iinet.net.au

Make cheques to Uthando Project. Send to 2 Healey Place, Gooseberry Hill WA 6076

They will be on sale at our next event which is the Kalamunda ZIGZAG Festival, Oct 28th. (At the time of writing this newsletter we have had a glorious time at this festival. Over

100 children, sometimes with their parents dressed the dolls with clothing made by WA dollmakers. the results are charming. Many dolls earned Sponsorship money which will enable us to sell the African cards through our website through Paypal. We will let you know when this is in operation). The next event is the Subiaco Craft and Community Fair, Sunday Nov 11th at Mueller Park. You may like to come to this lovely festival, help the children to design and paint shoulder bags for the dolls, and buy your cards. Please come if you live in Perth, and deliver any dolls for shipment soon. We will endeavour to have dolls packed by Friday 23rd November.

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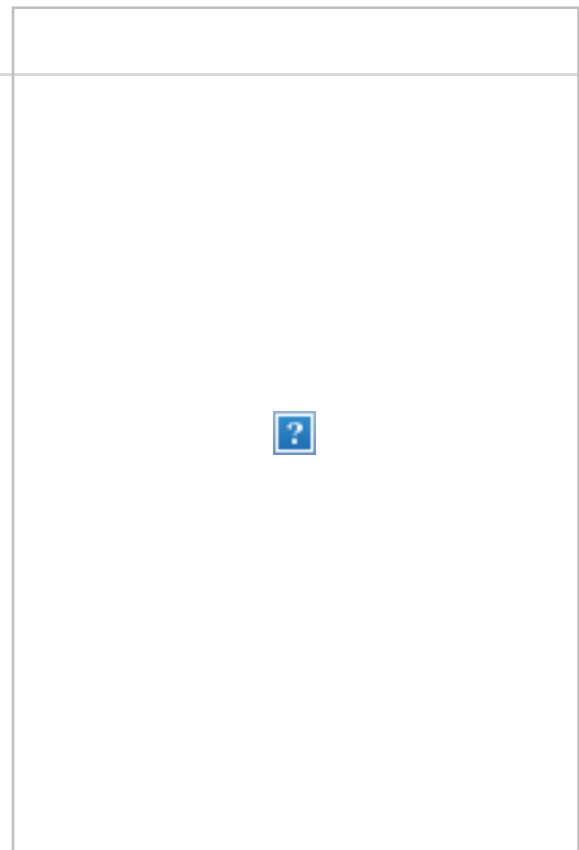


Our last Friday meeting at 2 Healey Place, Gooseberry Hill will be November 30th and we'll resume on January 11th.

We will have sent an estimated number of 2000 dolls by then. That will bring our project total to nearly 15,000 dolls for "doll's work and play".

Keep making them and know that all your beautiful work is recognised and loved by others. A special thankyou to Victorian dollmakers. It is a joy to open up the bags and greet the dolls before they are sent on further. Many were sponsored at the Auction. A special thankyou to Naomi for her amazing meercat knitting design, and to Kay Daw for the extraordinary set of "Wild Friends" which have drawn an order to go to Ethiopia. See the photo above.

Love from Georgia, Joy and the team



WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to all those we met at the Subiaco Craft Fair. Alison, Clare and the rest of the team enjoyed meeting you and hope you find our current newsletter interesting. Please feel free to contact any of our team with any queries on how to become involved.

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Uthando Project Website