

Albany Uthando Dollmakers Report

July 2013

(Editor's note; Albany is a port city in Western Australia facing the Southern Ocean: see photo below.)

Since July 2012 Albany has seen an increase in doll makers and others assisting with making doll kits, markets, checking and fixing dolls, making rugs or children's bags or contributing items needed to fit the needs of the particular recipients. I love the way many work together and trust each other's skills to jointly complete dolls or assist in any way needed. All are valuable volunteers whose work is very much appreciated. The call for doll maker bags and mini sewing kits for KZN was a good example of the Albany group pulling out the stops to help complete the huge number needed for the visit.



With a small but dedicated active core of 3 or 4 people, we are very proud of our achievements over the past 12 months. Many beautiful dolls, knitted animals and toys have been completed and dispatched. Countless kits have been sold, helping to fund the freight for dolls, quality fabrics and other consumables. Excess funds were donated - \$600 to *dlananathi* and \$1200 towards the May doll making workshops in Kwa-Zulu Natal.

Our healthy funding position would not have been achieved without the help of our generous benefactor, Karin Marsland and the café team at 14 Peel Place, Albany. \$1231 has been received through book, kit sales and cash donations at the café in just 7 months. Karin's choice to support Uthando for 2013 has resulted in more doll makers, provided invaluable funds and is a great local venue to promote Uthando to the wider community. Her understanding of Zulu culture and her enthusiasm to help those affected by HIV/AIDS in her 'homeland' has been unparalleled. We have also benefited from numerous kind donations of polyester fibre fill, quality fabrics and yarns, buttons, lace and trims, much of which has helped fill our very popular doll making kits.

To promote Uthando and doll making to the broader community the following workshops and talks were given over the last 12 months.

- Uthando Display and Knitting Workshop – Albany Museum
- Albany Pinwheel Quilters – Display, talk and sales
- Lockyer Kindergarten – Mothers doll making session, doll bag decoration and doll dress up for the children
- Alzheimers Support Group – Display and doll making
- Good Grief Support Group – Display and talk
- Albany Breaksea Probus – Display, talk and sales

Market opportunities to raise funds and awareness were conducted at the Denmark Markets, King River Scarecrow Festival, Torbay Craft Markets and the International Food Festival in Albany.



Packing dolls in King River Hall

These events saw a rise in individual and groups of new doll makers, interest in taking on a school project and many who continue to make dolls independent of the core group, but with our support and guidance. There is a flexible core of six to twelve doll makers who meet fortnightly enjoying companionship while sharing chat, cakes, patterns and ideas. Sewing days remain fortnightly and are either held at homes or at the King River Hall through their community 'fee-free' support.

Facebook has allowed us to share news, photos and patterns with individual doll makers and the Bunbury Group. This will be expanded further when the new website includes the necessary links.



Receiving feedback from Chris who attended the recent doll maker workshops in KZN, meeting the children and adults, has encouraged everyone to learn from her first hand experience. It gives a more personal understanding of the needs and an appreciation of the remarkable and committed work of the partner groups under the Dlanathi umbrella, all of whom met for the first time for a combined NGO meeting in Pietermaritzburg. We appreciate Chris's financial commitment and the hard work involved during the doll makers' visit, and foregoing her suitcase allowance to take many of our dolls direct to the NGO groups.

Our future focus is to increase the number of dolls and toys made, to be flexible to meet specific needs while welcoming and encouraging new members and promoting the Uthando Project as a whole.

Julie Fletcher (pictured here with Karin Marsland)
Coordinator - Uthando Doll Makers
Albany