

touching hearts & bringing play to life



July 2016 Newsletter

Uthando exhibition at Kidogo Arthouse, 12 - 17 July

Hardly have five Australian Uthando dollmakers returned from a very affirming trip to KwaZulu Natal to meet with our partner agencies, especially TREE, Dlalanathi and Family Literacy Project, than we are deep into final preparations for our major event of the



year.

Many of our readers will know that we are a true grass roots organisation, made up of volunteers who want to make a difference in vulnerable children's lives by making dolls for the children in KwaZulu Natal. Dollmakers come in all shapes and sizes, ages, skills and cultures. Dollmaking is open to all and we welcome new groups, individuals and schools.

WHY FUNDRAISING?

We have a real need to raise funds to cover the cost of freight (approx 8,000 dolls each year cost \$9,000 to ship) plus the minimal costs of special materials (most are donated), media, administration and marketing. Uthando dolls go to KZN agencies which work closely with children at risk, children of all ages including the very young, and children in remote areas.

Dlalanathi is our partner who receive funds for their psycho-social work, their long term commitment to communities, encouraging responses to uplift the burdens of elderly caregivers, of desperate youth, of teenage mums in a human landscape of unemployment, malnutrition, isolation and for all who are devastated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. To support their work we pledge approx \$20,000 (AUD) annually. These funds come largely from one major event each year, in this case, our "World Families, World Textiles" exhibition over 6 days at Kidogo, Fremantle.

Dolls which have been specially made for sale at this exhibition are now gathering together. It's very exciting.



Textiles in the form of fabric lengths, kimonos, tablecloths, cushions, skirts and shirts express the joy in colour, texture and designs. Many are from different African countries. Some new, some old.



OPENING OF THE EXHIBITION

If you are in Perth, Western Australia, please come to support Uthando in this remarkable exhibition. It will be a feast for the eyes and warmth for the heart. It's a good idea to bring lots of cash, although there are ATMs nearby. The official opening on Tuesday 12th will be at 2pm, followed by refreshments. Note that the exhibition gallery will open every day, including Tuesday 12th, at 10am, closing at 5pm.

Taku Scrutton, long time supporter of Uthando, originally from Zimbabwe, has been mentoring multicultural migrants in empowered public speaking. She and several of her mentorees will declare the exhibition open and will share stories of their childhood and play.

JOIN IN MINI WORKSHOPS

Each morning there will be mini workshops, starting 10am, to 12.30, for all to join in. Participation donation requested. Tue 12; Making a small doll, Wed 13, Sewing a red heart; Thu 14, Sewing felt animals; Fri 15, Making a mini doll; Sat 16, Rolled paper jewellery. All materials supplied and refreshments available.

Each workshop is being organised by a different metropolitan Uthando group, (lots of fun) and you will also be able to see examples of dolls from groups all over Australia, displayed in Gallery 2.

There will be other smaller, spontaneous activities too.

HEARTFELT THANKS TO ALL THE DONORS OF FABRICS, MAKERS OF DOLLS AND EXHIBITION VOLUNTEERS

A special thank you to Lotterywest, supporters of this exhibition.

SPONSORSHIP OF DOLLS FOR KZN Many communities have created dolls for the exhibition which includes sponsorship of dolls to continue on their journey after the exhibition (FINAL DELIVERY JULY 22ND OF OTHER DOLLS) by ship to KZN.

At the Kidogo Exhibition, for \$5, you can choose "your " doll, write a message on a label as if it is the doll speaking to the new child, tie it on and send your love with it. We have received feedback that the children love these messages.

This week, five boxes of wonderful dolls arrived from the Community Centre in Playford, Grenville, South Australia. What a great start to this new Uthando group! During the week, the excitement mounted as 100 dolls arrived from Communicare, a service business which upskills people "Working for the Dole". It could actually be Working for the Doll. Then as an excellent rolemodel for students experiencing community service, Mater Dei College, Edgewater completed 200 dolls which they have done for three years and have promised to continue next year too.

A few minutes ago, boxes of lovely dolls arrived from Queensland. Thank you.

It's been all hands on deck at the Anderson Road Community Centre in collating everything needed for hundreds of kits sold to \$5 for schools, exhibitions, other events and online. Each one is an individual collection with everything needed to make an original Uthando doll.

BRIEF REPORT ON AUSTRALIAN DOLLMAKERS' VISIT TO KZN

Two women from Tasmania and three from Western Australia were delighted and humbled to meet with our partners in KZN and to share dollmaking skills with approx. 100 women in Durban, Pietermaritzburg and Underberg. We would like to collaborate with a more detailed report of this powerful adventure in our next newsletter.

TREE welcomed us to Durban, took us to see what one woman could inspire by building a creche and early childhood play centre in an informal settlement at Mzamo. She began with nothing more than her vision, and now parents want their children to have the advantages of "learning to play, playing to learn". From little things, big things grow, if we roll up our sleeves like she is still doing.

A happy time was spent with TREE staff, college students and a group of women who had travelled in from Centacow to learn how to sew the Onesie doll. This doll style really suits the younger children and results were fabulous.

Thank you to the many Uthando women who made over 500 sewing kits for all the KZN workshops, with extra kits for them to train further dollmakers after their workshops. We carried 200 kgs of kits, materials and dolls with some interesting mishaps. *The photo shows the distribution of extra kits at the end of the workshop. Such energised happiness.*



Our first session with Dlananathi in Pietermaritzburg saw the superb manifestation of our intentions to encourage dollmaking across KZN. Over 40 women of all backgrounds came together for an inspiring 5 hours of making a "Classic" doll as a taste of dollmaking. A great sharing circle at the finish expressed what the next steps were and already new groups are forming to continue dollmaking. Welcome to this newsletter to all our new friends in PMB. Thank you for understanding the deeper values of play and dollmaking.

Family Literacy Project in Underberg brought together their staff, some facilitators from libraries, student interns, local sewing craft members and teachers, and two crafts women from a remote area. Incredible fun, singing, conversations and good basic dollmaking.



Visiting two library centres where we were blessed to be with children at story time and to see Uthando dolls in play, followed by the privilege of being with a Home Visitor and Facilitator in a traditional rondavel with mother and children, provided unforgettable highlights. Some of these photos and more will be shown for sale at Kidogo.





In the Stepmore Library children played with Uthando dolls kept there and really enjoyed being together, including the after school students. Younger ones said they preferred the bright orange giraffe, the older ones liked the grey monkey. So all sorts are needed.

We could write chapters about this adventure so far, and then we experienced three days of being with 30 Zulu women, with Dlananathi, where the depths of communication which can be encouraged whilst dollmaking, were indelibly expressed. This was part of Dlananathi's "Play for Communication" workshop. Over three days of singing, sharing and learning how to make a doll, there grew such a deep spirit of sympathetic community understanding. The dolls are a key to unlocking long held back expression, which is spoken into an atmosphere of true support. From this comes the soldering of individuals into forging a new community force designed to show courage and determination in bringing up their children into a kinder world. And in looking after each other too.

FEEDBACK ON OLD AND NEW PATTERNS AND ITEMS SENT

All of the **maternity blankets** sent earlier were very useful...and beautiful. It was decided not to continue knitting them as soft fabric blankets will better suit the applique of words and images by the young mums-to-be.

The success of the **sewing kits** and their usefulness in strategically having more dolls made in KZN meant that Uthando would love to send more sewing kits with each shipment. Please continue to make the sewing kits. It made the Aussie team feel very proud of every kit which we gave to the dollmakers. The materials were chosen with such dedication and made every woman feel special.

TREE would love more soft **balls with a bell** or other sound inside. (put the bell into something to keep it loose).

We showed a sample "**Slingo**" which is a knitted ball with extensions like French knitting added to it. Easier for little ones to catch with an extra loop or "leg".

We could also include many more **Child wraps** (140 x 30 cms) as all the children love tying their doll on their back. Soft lightweight fabric, could be stretchy, is best. No need to oversew or hem if it is no-fray. We could reduce the number of doll wraps instead.

We took hundreds of photos and videos which will appear on our website in due course.

I sign off now, fulfilled with the memories of so many new friendships in KZN, the beauty of old friendships and the power of aligned actions.

VIDEO LINK INVITING US TO COME TO THE KIDOGO ARTHOUSE EXHIBITION

You can hear the voices of the Mpumusa community women's spontaneous singing as background to the Youtube invitation to come to Kidogo. Just a couple of minutes of play, but lifetimes of community singing lie behind it. Thanks go to Anita, Sara and their mum, Una of UOK Productions for creating this lovely Youtube video.

<https://youtu.be/V3idAulmagY>

Warm wishes from Georgia and shared around from all the Uthando dollmakers and teams everywhere.