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THE UTHANDO PROJECT *Newsletter*

JUNE 2012 NEWSLETTER

Dear Dollmakers and Friends of Uthando,

It has taken me quite some time to settle the flimflam ragtag bits of my mind to be able to give to you a taste of Uthando Project over the last 5 months when we finished the year 2011 having had CHOGM, multicultural workshops, many schools involved and the launching of our book, 100 DOLLS, COUNTLESS HEARTS.

This newsletter includes four pages of really valuable letters from Dr Julie Stone, Nandisa and Rachel of dlalanathi. So please settle in for a "good read".

Over 1400 dolls for TREE, dlalanathi, Lifeline, Sizabantwana and Family Literacy Groups and 200 books for dlalanathi have just arrived in Durban. It is likely that we will send the next sea freight consignment at the end of August.

Dlalanathi has received our pledge of \$30,000 for 2011 – 12, thanks to the generosity of several financial donors, the great sales of our kits, (Di, Colleen and Anne), many other donations and the income from book sales. This pledge goes towards the salary of a Zulu speaking psychologist where her work brings constant and deep changes within specific communities.

Let me introduce bright spark Nandisa Tushini who Julie Stone (founder of Uthando Project) and I met in dlalanathi's office in Pietermaritzburg and then were together for five full-on days in Cape Town at the 13th World Infant Mental Health Conference.

Photo ; a small section of our exhibition with Kay Daw's animal puppets looking down from the top of the shell. The boy in the red jumper was a crowd favourite.



Julie, Nandisa Tushini and Rachel Rozentals-Thresher (CEO dlalanathi) jointly presented one of the first workshops at the conference (700 international delegates). Their presentation "Across Countries, Cultures and Language" met with great acclaim as being one of the best of the whole conference! Affirming their message, in the audience was Pam Picken, former CEO TREE, who has met with many Perth dollmakers and has always recognised the contribution and validity of Uthando to the TREE

childcare graduates across KZN.

Pam introduced her beloved Cape Town to Julie and me, making our time with her memorable and fun. One highlight was seeing the exhibition of drawings of Zulu and other southern African traditional people made between 1940 -60 by Barbara Tyrell, who just turned 100.



Photo; Pam Picken above Cape Town

Back to Nandisa. She wrote this letter to all of us on her return. (AIMH is the Australian Association for Infant Mental Health, which contributed generously to airfares and registration for Nandisa and Rachel). It was otherwise evident that the cost of these factors inhibited attendance from other African participants...only a handful could attend. This is appalling and illustrates the great divide between "rich and poor".

Dear Julie, AIMH Melbourne and Uthando,

I hereby express our heartfelt gratitude for the opportunity to be involved in the WAIMH conference that was held on 17-21 April 2012.

The calibre of the presentations and the insights were astounding. I found myself in a sea of knowledge and in the presence of the greatest minds in child mental health, and wished I could have gone to more presentations. Sadly I could only be at one venue at a time. However the presentations that I did go to were a wonderful window to the kind of work that goes into really understanding and appreciating the efforts around the world towards child and infant mental health.

One such presentation that I attended was by a group from Norway, Sidsel Haug, Teija Anke and Ida Brandtzæg, who presented on "Training health practitioners in Infant Mental Health". Although their context for the work that they do is very different to ours in that they work from a university and train professionals on infant mental health, and we as dlalanathi train people who are largely uneducated in the formal sector and in the communities. This sparked a huge discussion around how we could help each other and give each other insights on what could be missing in each of our programmes. Contributions from a gentleman from Germany, a lady from England and me from Africa made this a truly international conversation. This experience blew me away indeed. I found myself largely challenged and frustrated at the same time regarding the lack of understanding of the context in which I work by people in other parts of the world, but also humbled by their commitment and willingness to learn and incorporate my concerns into their thinking. I suppose for me these were the feelings that carried throughout the conference, as well as appreciation of just being in the midst of it all. I remember feeling like I could not take it all in at some point, and like it was far too much. However I managed to find my feet again and I owe this experience to Uthando dolls project, and the support of AIMH Melbourne who made it possible for me to attend.

I also want to express my gratitude regarding the opportunity to 'play on a world stage' so to speak. None of my colleagues even dream of such opportunities, having the world listen to me as I speak of my experience working in little KwaZulu Natal. And sharing the stage with brilliant, vibrant and very intelligent women who are willing to pay the huge price it takes to change the world through partnerships, Rachel and Julie. This experience has helped me to see the work that dlalanathi does in the context of academia, and this is an important insight for me. As an academic we always strive to find ways in which we can support our hypothesis, etc. and often we use theory to inform practice. However this time I found myself trying to persuade academics to stop, and use practice to inform theory. After all when we start with what we are doing, and its working, surely we can use that to help us understand theoretically what we are practicing.

I am however uncertain that we could have done it without the soft, slow words of encouragement from 'Gorgeous Georgia' that certainly calmed my spirit, supported and grounded me. What a blessing ladies. We really are a terrific team!

I am beside myself with excitement about our writing. I certainly feel honoured to be part

of this project that changes lives, doll by doll, relationship by relationship.

Again thank you, Nandisa Tushini

Here are two insightful letters which Julie sent while we were in Pietermaritzburg and Cape Town.

Sunday, 15th April 2012, Dear Uthando Friends,

(Edited paras which describe how Pam stored our voluminous luggage which had its own saga.)

It was an early start Wednesday morning, we arrived at the new Durban airport and drove to Pietermaritzburg. How lovely it was to be with the dlalanathi team again. They greeted us so warmly and then Georgia got to work. We spent the afternoon making dolls with the team and learning something about them and their current work.

On Thursday Georgia drove off to Winterton with Robyn Hemmens. Zimele is an NGO encouraging income earning through craft work for rural women. Robyn and Georgia spent two rewarding days with two very skilled women. Together they made and dressed four dolls using different techniques. Georgia was thrilled with the training and the group's potential and cannot wait to see the developments.

I stayed in Pietermaritzburg and shared the time talking with Rachel and some colleagues about the new political developments and promises and possibilities for the early childhood development sector. Amazing work being done, amidst the complex challenges you are aware of. Rachel and I also spent some time planning the workshop for the Conference.

Yesterday morning, Faith and her beautiful four year old daughter, Sbonga, guided us to Mfakatini, the community you have all met in Robyn's marvellous photographs and stories in the book. Mfakatini is a rural community an hour's drive from Pietermaritzburg. We met in the child-care centre, a simple row of mud brick rooms, with bush timber rafters under tin. Simple wooden bench seats the only furnishing.

As Faith translated between isi-Zulu and English, Sbonga played: dressing and undressing, nursing and rocking the family of dolls spilling from her Mummy's new Uthando bag.

It was such a joy to meet some of the women in person and to hear first hand their sense of achievement in the work they have done with dlalanathi and to see and hear their commitment to the children in their community. In 2009 when they first began working with dlalanathi, nearly all of the women said when they began they felt that dolls and play were a waste of time. It was not until the doll's character emerged through their creation that the magic of the doll awakened a new understanding within each of them – for them self and the children in their care.

In the afternoon we drove through the ravishingly beautiful Valley of a 1,000 Hills to meet Snoeks Desmond and her friend Jenny for afternoon tea. Together Snoeks

and Jenny were instrumental in the setting up of the Family Literacy Program, and now they both serve on the Board. Snoeks was thrilled to be given a copy of the book – both women were enchanted and delighted by it. Snoeks also shared some marvellous photos she took when she was with you all one Friday in the spring of 2009.

Later this morning Mbongi Mtshali is coming to share some time with us. We plan to have tea with Graham and Joan Lindegger later today. Tomorrow Georgia is meeting Debbie Harrison at Lifeline, whilst I spend an hour with Rachel and Nandisa refining the workshop. Then we are off to meet Bertha Magoge, the new Director of TREE before our 6pm flight to Cape Town.

Love to you all,

Georgia & Julie

Bertha Magoge and TREE

Our meeting with Bertha Magoge, the new Director, and the dedicated TREE staff took place in a sunny room full of examples of papier mache furniture and other engaging ideas to be made by the early childhood development students. This sunniness shone out of Bertha too. She shared about strengthening the focus on the child within the women's training. We now can picture the women with whom we email about the arrival, distribution and suitability of the dolls. TREE needs strongly made, stimulating dolls for 0 – 5year olds, often to be played with by 20 children.



Conference Report

Julie's second letter is from Cape Town.

Friday, 20th April 2012

Dear Uthando Friends

The WAIMH Conference finishes tomorrow. For many people the Uthando Project Exhibition will be their "take home highlight". The display looked magnificent in the space and was a colourful draw-card for 100s of people. In keeping with the exhibition, Georgia has been absolutely MAGNIFICENT too: engaging all comers, indefatigable in her energy and her loving openness to go with whatever and whoever presents them self. She has had many conversations with people from all over the world who are

excited to transplant a little of the Uthando Project magic, which you have all contributed to, to see if they can grow something within their own communities.

Photo; Everyone wanted to cuddle Lynne Tognolini's mother and child pair

Our workshop went well too. Rachel and Nandisa were fabulous – offering clear, shining examples of what is possible when we work together. After the workshop a senior social worker from Brisbane told them that it was the best community development work she had ever heard presented. A very beautiful Italian child psychiatrist, was excited by the possibilities that the work and the doll making had for the ante-natal and postnatal mental health work she does in rural Italy. She bought a copy of the book to take home and presented us with a copy of three publications that her team have created. We are going to need some help with the translation from the Italian but the illustrations are delicious.



We have sold quite a few books – and have high hopes for a rush on sales tomorrow. At least one colleague has put in an order “on-line”. Quite a few folk have deposited 50 or 100 Rand in the donation box and every one wanted to buy the dolls!

At lunchtime today I was interviewed by a Nancy Richards on her daily radio program for the South African Broadcasting Commission. We talked for 15 minutes. Nancy was engaged and interested and utterly captivated with Lynn’s mother and child doll which I had with me. She told listeners to check out our website and I left a copy of the book and a dlalanathi brochure with her team in the hope that further conversation may unfold in the future. I had the chance to reiterate a message that Linda Richter made in yesterday’s plenary session – that the child survival & mortality agenda must no longer be kept separate from the child development agenda: that calories and emotional nourishment are both vital for a child’s survival and I stressed that play is an essential aspect of emotional nourishment.

Many of the papers have been challenging and stimulating. Rachel and Nandisa have enjoyed being part of the conference and I know that new possibilities and opportunities will open up for dlalanathi following this conference.

So Dear Uthando Friends, thank you again for all you have contributed to make this exhibition such a successful one. Georgia continues her good work this evening. She is at the conference dinner no doubt net-working and talking to others and making new friends for Uthando. I have been happy to sit in our very comfortable apartment quietly catching up with myself and taking the chance to share news with you all. With love from us both. Julie & Georgia

Exhibitions of 100 DOLLS, COUNTLESS HEARTS

Before taking to South Africa the hundred dolls whose stories are in our book, they were exhibited at the **Midland Junction Arts Centre** in February, then at the **Western Australian Museum, Albany** and at the **Mirraboopa Shopping Centre** in March. Each place had its own atmosphere. In Midland, with ample gallery space and good lighting, it was matched with an activities room, enjoyed by many people, especially Home Schooling families. In Albany, with good media coverage, we had a “one teacher” old primary school building where lots and lots of folk came from senior’s centres, the high school and attracted the general public. Lots of interaction which brought into high animation, the Albany Uthando dollmakers. Definitely a “good time was had by all”. Jennifer Muir-Dick, (our Uthando knitter extraordinaire) and her family supported the 10 day event with lots of local rostered volunteers.



Photo;The One Room School building at the Western Australian Museum- Albany with our 100 Dolls Exhibition and activities table in front.. Over a hundred dolls made in Albany are to the right.

The whole exhibition was welcomed-in spectacularly with a four woman group playing African drums. It feels like just the right time in our evolution as a grass roots organisation for leadership to stand up. The Albany group, coordinated by Julie Fletcher, sent three bags of dolls directly from **Albany** to Lifeline in KZN.

More recently Deborah Campbell has begun a lively group in **Bunbury**.

Kadajiny Koort, Mirraboopa, South Lakes, Perth Town Hall

There’s a possibility of a new group in central Perth following the successful “training” within the **Kadajiny Koort workshops**, “Heart Learning” Aboriginal dollmaking and sharing crosscultural stories funded by the City of Stirling. These were coordinated by Cheryl Bradley bringing in Aboriginal art and cultural knowledge, supported in dollmaking practicalities by our community project coordinator, Iris Whitelock. It is so hard to give you only a few sentences about such workshops when the effects on the participants are so positive. Our dollmaking carries both friendship and creativity.



Likewise Lynne Jones, with **Soroptimist** colleague, Sally Ryan, partnered the leading staff of the South Lakes community **Ottey Centre** in bringing together Aboriginal women with women of many different backgrounds.

Photo; Happy conversations at the Kadajiny Koort workshop at the Ottey Centre.

These two Kadajiny Koort workshops culminated in another partnership with Aboriginal dollmakers from Narrogin to present a combined doll and stories exhibition in the prestigious Perth Town Hall over four days of **Reconciliation Week**. This exhibition concluded with luncheon for all the participants of these workshops, friends and colleagues and was encouraged and funded by the really supportive Department of Indigenous Affairs.

More workshops

Iris, with the sterling help of Aldy Bagnall and again funded by the City of Stirling, brought dollmaking to a group of Ethiopian migrant women, (**Oromo** language). This series was in partnership with ASeTTS (Australian Service for Torture and Trauma Survivors). The women and their youngsters loved it.

Taku Scrutton, originally from Zimbabwe (we are so lucky to have her in Australia) has mesmerised her work colleagues at **AECOM** in Perth, to make beautiful dolls which were presented in May. Taku represents inspired leadership bringing into reality that ANYONE can make a doll for Uthando.

We are planning to run Uthando workshops at the Seniors' Community Centre, **Citiplace**, Perth Railway Station, starting in July. If you or friends are interested in joining in, please contact Georgia. 08 9293 2363 straight away.

Schools making wonderful dolls

Lynne Tognolini, our **Schools** coordinator writes;

It is always a great pleasure to visit schools where teachers and students display such awareness and goodwill towards the wellbeing of other children through participation in the Uthando Project. This year is no different. Nothing beats the feeling I get when I meet these groups and share in their enthusiasm for being part of something positive and real that they can contribute.

Every group tackles the project in a unique way, adding to the diversity and individuality of the dolls produced. I think it is well understood by teachers that the assistance of the wider community of parent and adults is almost an essential part of the process, ensuring that the dolls will be strong enough for sustained play by young children.

*Thank you to: **Scotch College, All Saints College, St Mark's Anglican Community College, Cannington Community College, Mater Dei College, Santa Maria College, Polytechnic West, Meerilinga, Campbell Primary School, Victoria Park Primary School, Rostrata Primary School, St Patrick's Catholic Primary School Fremantle.***

A special thank you to Year 11 students from Mater Dei who, as part of their community service commitment, prepared materials for the doll making kits we sell. Also 200 dolls will come from them soon! Fantastic!!

We also know that schools in Tasmania, Victoria, UK and USA are making dolls too. There are no limits. Thank you to all school who take on the commitment to the children of KwaZulu-Natal.

Board of Management for Uthando

The **Board of Management** of Uthando Project Inc is always open to ideas, suggestions, contributions directly from any dollmaker or group. While the project is a grassroots organisation, the Board manages the local, national and international direction and intentions of the project, the legal obligations, the creation and administration of finances, the distribution of dolls and funds and any other responsibilities relating to dollmakers and their dolls, public awareness and partnerships with other organisations.

The Board consists of; *Director*, Dr Julie Stone (Melbourne), *Chairperson*, Georgia Efford, *Secretary*, Clare Harris, *Treasurer*, Lis Hansen, *Schools coordinator*, Lynne Tognolini, *Community Project coordinator*, Iris Whitelock, *Dollmakers' representative*, Anne Bell. We meet four times a year, including an AGM, and are in constant communication. Any dollmaker is most welcome to be an observer at any meeting and on payment of \$5 become a participating member at the AGM. The organisation is managed with rigorous transparency which provides direct access to all aspects of the project. At all times we hold the wellbeing of the children of KwaZulu Natal in our sights and decisions.

If you would like to be personally informed of the date of the next AGM, (probably end July), please reply to Georgia.

Fundraising Garden Party, Concert and Book Sales

Before going to Cape Town and packing the 100 DOLLS exhibition (with some ingenuity, I can tell you) we held a **Garden Party** in our garden. Not only did it raise funds for the Exhibition and travelling expenses, the local choir, Akapellamunda, sang a batch of African songs with great vigour and precipitously for the conductor on the edge of the pool.



Photo; Akapellamunda in full swing with African songs

It brought together many friends and dollmakers. In the house, we hung the two great murals for their last viewing in Australia. Kay Daw gave her knitted Australian animals their debut, and we could all admire Isabella Cowin's new crocheted, very sweet and witty, African animals.

In May Deborah Pearson arranged another of her magical fundraising **concerts** with soloists, duets and stories read by their authors. There's something perfect about late autumnal light, real live music and words and companionship mutually enjoying soul food.

Book sales seem to show that sales are stronger where handcrafts and materials are sold. Please consider buying more copies of our book. 100% of book sales income goes to dlalanathi's work.

Please order by email; uthandoproject@hotmail.com,

or through Lis Hansen,

355 Belmont Ave, Cloverdale WA 6105.

\$35 plus P &P = \$49.95.

dlalanathi's CEO Rachel's letter

It is most fitting that this newsletter is brought to a close by Rachel Rozentals-Thresher, the wondrous leader and CEO of dlalanathi. Rachel is working towards our 100 DOLL exhibition being experienced elsewhere in KZN.

Please keep on making and sending in the dolls. Hardly a day goes by without some new small friends appearing on the door knob. We have a wonderful project going here and at your place. The impact can be imagined but not really measured.

Love from Georgia and the Friday mob.

Photo; Georgina Noble's Irish doll inviting everyone to enjoy the exhibition

Here is Rachel's letter. It is quite long and detailed, but is a TREASURE. Our relationship with dlalanathi guides our actions and commitment to the children of KwaZulu-Natal.

Dear Julie, AIMH Melbourne, Georgia and Uthando,

What a privilege for me and Nandisa to be afforded the opportunity to represent our work

and extra-ordinary partnership with Uthando, at the 13th World Congress of the World Association for Infant Mental Health.

It is a quite a challenge to put into words the significance of the experience, as it has had an impact on me personally, on our thinking about our current work and our intentions for work as an organisation going forward. It has also strengthened our on-going partnership with Uthando. So please accept the length of the letter.

On a very practical level the cost of attending this conference even though it was in South Africa was significant. Conference fees, accommodation and travel costs were equivalent to a professional's full-time salary for more than 1 month. Without your support and some sponsorship from WAIMH we would not have been able to attend. Sadly participants from South Africa and Africa at large were notable by their absence and I suspect that cost had a lot to do with that. Your generous contribution meant that we could be present (in the flesh) as a team. A significantly representative team which included a Zulu speaking psychologist (Nandi), an local NGO leader (me) and an Australian Child Psychiatrist (Julie Stone who needs no introduction to you). All of us kept very much in the congress participant's 'eye', through the most magnificent doll exhibition hosted with grace, energy and heart by Georgia Efford of Uthando.



The exhibition drew much attention from congress delegates (and their children) and served as an interest point for many of the people who served food and drinks over the congress. I recall a waiter between sessions telling me about the dolls, and what stories Georgia had told about the dolls and doll makers. His connection with the dolls and his desire to share this I feel sums up the Uthando-dlalanathi partnership, the dolls bring us together and strengthen relationships through inviting play and connection with self and others.

HUGE thank you's to Georgia, the doll makers, people who carried the exhibition in their luggage and for the amazing team within Uthando who have held the vision of the exhibition and the book and carried it through right up to delivery into our hands.

Had Julie not led the writing of the abstract, we would not have thought about presenting our work to this audience. While our work is based on sound theory, rigorous practice and a real intention to serve, we really have to work at keeping it on the community agenda. Doll making and engaging mothers and caregivers in play for communication with their children does not always seem relevant in the wider context of the struggles in South Africa and Africa. Julie Stone has helped us remember that what we do is important as it affirms relationship, with the emotional needs of the child at the core. Play and communication helps carer and child experience the joy of interactional exchange. It is good for both and vital in healthy development.

We are helping people who are pretty overwhelmed explore the joy and possibility of responsive affective care for children. You are helping us (also pretty over-whelmed at times) be reminded of the importance of child-adult relationship and play, and that its worth the efforts, worth the ongoing investment in keeping it on the agenda in way families in difficulty can experience its power and be strengthen thereby. Thank you for this encouraging and enriching experience.

By now some of you may have seen the Congress program, we were given very full days

of rich nutritious food for thought. I feel I can't fully respect the conference without sharing some of the content which powerfully moved, inspired, enlightened, taught and challenged me. This maybe a bit too much information so skip this heading if it's too long and boring.

Congress Content: We began with a deeply moving presentation by Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela sharing research around moments of love and forgiveness in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. She described an incredible point of meeting between a man responsible for political violence and those aggrieved. This man, responsible for the deaths of their children, faced a group of grieving mothers and asked their forgiveness through addressing them as 'My mothers'. The words bring tears as I think of them as they hold his acknowledgment of deep injury to his own kin at his own hand. In response the group of mothers extend forgiveness through the memory of his mother. It was profound!

From an introduction through the heart, we moved to presentations from Nigeria and South Africa which placed our challenges in light of the scale of need, level of poverty and limited number of skilled professionals on the congress agenda.

Our feast continued with Arnold Sameroff sharing a lifetime of work and presenting an 'Integrated Theory of Development' acknowledging the complex tensions and dynamics of development, summarising the debates and drawing them into an elegant pictorial representation. Beautiful!

Linda Richter in her plenary session also took a journey through her life's work where she pleaded with us all to NOT to separate the child survival agenda and the infant mental health agenda. We left inspired and challenged.

We were entertained by a cavalier and yet thought-provoking M. Solms who summarised Psycho dynamic theory and Neuroscience in 3 steps each, explained how the brain mechanism for depression is linked with attachment and made a plea again for integration between brain function and the purpose of emotions.

Jane Davies presented 3 powerful stories of healing through psychotherapy with mothers and infants which brought the power of working with the child's experience to the fore. A feeding problem, a sleeping problem and an aggressive child became stories of children communicating their need to cope with loss of a grandmother killed in a fire, trauma at a relationship breakdown between parents and a mother and child accepting their mutual vulnerability in learning to receive what they need from each other and their wider network. Astrid Berg showed footage of psychotherapy with a therapist, interpreter (co-therapist) and a mother and child showing how 'A little goes a long way in South Africa'.

Other outstanding presentations Neil Boris presented a plenary on 'What is security priming?'. Creating community holding environments for babies and families by D Bremond and S Greenwald; Prioritizing supervision and support; Mechanisms mediating effects of maternal postnatal depression on infant development; Pregnancy and Motherhood in adverse conditions; Ubulele Baby Mat Project: Facilitating a dialogue between psyche and soma in health care clinics in townships in Johannesburg; Enhancing interactions through early childhood mental health consultation.

Finally at the last plenary a story of a partnership between two French and Burkina Faso child psychiatric teams echoed much of what is strong between Uthando and dlalanathi and what Julie Stone so powerfully urged at the end of our talk. Much can be achieved through partnerships between professionals in First World Countries and Africa, seeking to understand the challenges we face, affirming the strengths we have and supporting each other in practice for the benefit of children in distress and difficulty.

So what has this done or meant for us at dlalanathi:

1. Affirmed what is valuable: Our work is rooted in sound theory and is 'translated' at an experience level in a way that makes it manageable and useful given the needs and constraints of our context. Listening to great minds and academics explain things in theory that we experience in practice encourages us to really focus on what is core, and keep doing what we do;

2. Affirmed the challenges and the need to continue to work in spite of them: When the need is so huge you can often question whether the little you are able to achieve is relevant, and the conference speakers affirmed that over and over;

3. Re-affirmed the importance of infant mental health: Inspired us to think more about ways to work with mothers and infants in the communities we serve. Improve our practice and to keep learning, keep the dialogue between theory and practice alive. Possibly even contribute to it through writing in partnership.

This year we enter a new community and the bulk of our work will be focused on serving in a rural setting. We are more inspired than ever before to focus on infant and child mental health.

Thank you, thank you, thank you,

We look forward to the future unfolding of our relationship,

Rachel

Unforgettable picture

Thuli and Dudu from the Zimele craft group in Winterton, KZN.



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