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THE UTHANDO PROJECT *Newsletter*

March 2011 Newsletter

Since our last international newsletter, August 2010, many luscious dolls have arrived from all over Australia to be combined with WA dolls and sent to KwaZulu-Natal. Many thanks to all the dollmakers overseas who independently send their dolls directly to TREE in Durban. The Uthando dolls go to specific organisations whose works centre on children. This may include orphans, but the dolls really go to **children of all descriptions, backgrounds and needs.** This point is vital in understanding Uthando's stand on "Who gets the dolls?"

Our purpose is to provide handmade dolls for the emotional wellbeing of the children of KwaZulu-Natal, where HIV/AIDS wreaks havoc with individuals, families and communities. Our main concern is to promote the power of PLAY in accessing and expressing the hurts and joys of children through sensitive interaction with their parents/grandparents/carers/counsellors. We can only begin to wonder at , and then be humbled by, the enormous daily load which KZN volunteers unflinchingly tackle. Many of these volunteers are organised within NonGovernment Organisations, called NGOs. Uthando Project Inc works with only a handful of NGOs, but each one is dear to us and their leadership is known personally to most members of the Board of Management.



These friendly partnerships have given us a new direction for the method of sending the dolls.

At our Garden Party in November we launched the concept of **Freight Partners** . It costs approx \$120 to send by Australia Post one bag of dolls (40 - 80 dolls) which goes directly to the appropriate NGO's post office, rather than having to be collected in Durban, taken to Pietermaritzburg for further collection by the individual organisation. Each Freight Partner pays for the postage of one bag, twice a year. The advantage is that the Partners can focus on a specific NGO through website study and have the sense of of a closer relationship with the children and the Uthando dolls. Overlying this postage structure is the fact that about 60% of all our dolls are sent by ship to TREE in Durban, where they are distributed widely through their graduate network over the whole of KZN.

TREE's CEO, Pam Picken, recently emailed this lovely message. Pam writes "Last week I went in to see one of our projects near Ladysmith and you have NO IDEA what joy the dolls bring. The children love them so!"

If you are intrigued / delighted/ keen to become a Freight Partner by contributing \$120

twice a year, please contact Georgia Efford. 089293 2363 or on email, georgia1@iinet.net.au.

Imagine the simplicity and power of having 40 - 50 Freight Partners. Please consider this request. as an individual or a group.

I am writing this newsletter on March 8th which is the 100 Anniversary of the International Women's Day.....these thoughts seem highly fitting. We are all grass roots revolutionaries contributing to a fairer world for ALL.

These are the NGOs who have received our dolls over the years and are continuing to do so.

- dlalanathi; where we send unique, over the top, story telling dolls for community training, counsellors and conference presentations. We also pledge \$13,000 AUD for 2011.
- Lifeline and Rape Crisis Centres; for comforting dolls given to each child, covering all ages.
- Sizabantwana; a group of inspired 14 Primary Schools in Pietermaritzburg where dolls can be played with in class rooms or given to individual children in need.
- Cerebral Palsy Association rural and city members; with larger dolls easy to dress and hold
- The Africa Centre, Mtubatuba, for the Amagugu Project headed by our long time friend Tamsen RoCHAT, senior psychologist. Amagugu means "our treasures" in isiZulu. Tamsen has provided us with a brief report based on the pilot project of 20 HIV+ mothers encouraged to disclose their HIV status to one of their children. She is now deep into the main body of research with 100 families for which we sent 452 dolls in December to have them in time. Tamsen has also given us a fuller report on this critical area of fighting HIV/AIDS, which is about disclosing one's status with sensitivity and clarity to one's children. If you would like to read Tamsen's report, please email Georgia, georgia1@iinet.net.au and request that a copy be sent to you. The photo here is of *three of The Africa Centre's staff* working with Tamsen, opening the bags of dolls, genuinely excited about the prospect of the families in the research project receiving them. Dumo and Bonnie at the back with Hlengiwe in front. Could be a cover shot for Vogue.
- Since beginning this research Tamsen and her staff have worked in collaboration with [dlalanathi](#) to evolve the role of the dolls and dollmaking. this is a beautiful example of our partners contributing to each other. Very soon we will need a further 500 dolls for all ages of children to send to Tamsen, (early April) followed by another contingent of 500 in June. So keep on with the dollmaking everyone.

MORE AND MORE SCHOOLS MAKE DOLLS

Lynne Tognolini, who has driven many kilometers and spoken with hundreds of students and teachers, writes the following;

"Primary and secondary schools continue to embrace the values of Uthando project by engaging in dollmaking.

Sacred Heart, Highgate, year 6 students presented their UNIQUE hand felted dolls, each with a personal message of love, hope and companionship, at a final school assembly in 2010.



Gooseberry Hill Primary School participated for FIFTH time with 60 creative dolls made by year 4 and 5 students. You would love the ingenuity of the painted front view of animals on the front of a shirt, with the BACK VIEW of the animal on the back of the shirt.

Rostrata Primary School year 5 students raised extra money to assist in the freight costs of their dolls.

Comet Bay, Attadale, Medina, St Paul's Mt Lawley schools and Chisholm College are to be congratulated for delivering their contribution of completed dolls, each of which has

delightful personality and style.

Other schools in Victoria and Western Australia (and sometimes anonymous boxes of dolls arrive) all deserve everyone's praise and thanks.

Toodyay District High School, a consistent supporter, must have seen their students working for hours inventing their own patterns embroidered in wool. For many senior dollmakers it took us back to our primary school days of counting the threads on hessian material.

The Uthando Project offers a wonderful opportunity for involvement of the wider school community. Parent assistance is invaluable, (sometimes the parent of the teacher!) and can ensure that the dolls made by young enthusiastic "learner sewers" will be robust enough for play by the children in South Africa. A huge thank you is extended to all teachers, adults and students whose commitment is strong and demonstrates their compassion and caring for others."

Pictured: Close up of Toodyay DHS embroidery

DOLLMAKING IN SCHOOLS

St Thomas Moore Primary School, Margaret River, WA.



A WOMAN'S LEADERSHIP

Since Uthando Project became incorporated, Judy Mackintosh has held the role of secretary, quietly and ably. She has now handed the secretaryship over to Clare Harris who will handle it in much the same way ensuring that the "business" of our project is always accessible, transparent and generous. A lot of doll stuff happens around these quiet, able women which keeps the engine room ticking over. For instance, here is Judy's report on **Seniors and Community Groups.**

"Throughout the year many donations of dolls, wool, doll rugs and haberdashery have

been received from St John Paul Catholic Church Craft Circle; St Barnabas Anglican Church Craft and Fellowship Group; St Martin in the Field Anglican Church Op Shop and Church Craft Group, Kensington; St Andrews Anglican Mothers Union Group; Waminda Care Centre, Bentley; Patchwork Group, Bentley Park; Session House Craft Circle,



Blairgowrie, Scotland.

Residents of Bentley Park Retirement Village continue to hand make many bright dolls and wraps, especially Irene Metcalfe, centenarian "Fitzie" Taylor and Rhonda Sammels."

To all of us, these three named supporters will hold the banner for hundreds of dollmakers everywhere who aren't named, but their contribution is valued in just the same way.

This photo shows leadership in a happy way with Lynne Tognolini and Marie Corbett spreading the Uthando word in the children's section of the **Kalamunda Zigzag Festival, October 2010.**

MAKING AN UTHANDO DOLL STRONG AND SUITABLE

Over the 6 years we have been sending dolls to KwaZulu-Natal (27,500 of them!) we keep on learning about suitability of style and finish.

Keep in mind that dolls are likely to be sorted out in age suitability, but in general the following points apply to all dolls. Please treat these as guidelines which come with experience!!!!

- Make the dolls of moderate size as we can pack many more in a bag to save freight costs. Approx 30cms is ideal.
- Stuff them to be firmly comfortable, not rock hard and not underfed.
- Make the doll with brown skin; hair may be black, but also could be fantasy colours. Dolls with white or pink faces often have to have plastic surgery with a new brown face.
- Try to make eyes happy and looking straight ahead. Avoid starey eyes where there is white all the way around. Look closely and consider your reaction to the eyes on these two dolls. The one on the left has a tendency to be a bit scarey and the boy on the right to be looking happy. Please don't be offended if you have made "scarey" eyes in the past. All children are very accepting of the doll's right to be what it is. It probably is an adult thing.
- Make eyes black or brown, NOT blue.
- Ensure that hair cannot be pulled out, even if it takes ages to make it strongly attached. It is worth it. Hair is such an important play material for children. All the better if it can be plaited or tied up.
- Make dolls' clothes roomy enough for easy dressing up. Avoid sewing clothes to the doll. Make at least three items of clothing per doll plus underpants. (Note: if your dolls are made with little children in mind, often the knitted dolls, then a skirt may be knitted in. Perhaps add a cuddle rug for that type of doll, to encourage play between mother /carer and child).
- Don't use GLUE anywhere. It goes uncomfortably hard; makes it impossible to sew through and a child's fingers will pick off the attachments with a child's persistence.
- Even given these comments, it is fabulous to know that nearly all of the 27.500 dolls sent are recognisably individual.
- The Classic Sewn Doll Pattern can be downloaded from our website, www.uthandoproject.org in the Dollmakers Workbook.



DOLLMAKING KITS; A many layered success

Anne Bell and Di Cunningham must have cut hundreds of metres of knit fabric, cotton material and thousands of metres of lace, elastic and ribbon to make several thousand dollmaking kits sold over the past year. They hold a hard working Friday meeting team together and many, many folk deliver all sorts of haberdashery, fabric, buttons and beads which make up these great \$5 kits. PLEASE CONTINUE TO DO SO. To give you an idea of where these dollkits are sold, in just over the last week, includes a weekend festival in Augusta (including the school), indigenous international weaving festival in Albany, in Midland Womens' Health Care Place for staff and young mothers, City of Stirling for a special project called "Untold Stories" with aboriginal women and similarly in Brookton, Brockman Community House in Beechboro (their third lot) and recently to several schools.

We like the idea of dollmakers making two dolls "One to Hold and One to Give" as the dolls made through these kits may not necessarily be given back to go on to KZN. This is absolutely no problem as it is of great value for western children to love an "African" doll too. It also gives an opportunity for children to make dolls at home with their granny or mum or together with friends.

If you are interested in ordering kits (any quantity) please email our Treasurer, Lis Hansen, on enar@inet.net.au who will send you an invoice. Please give her your postal details. The actual postage cost will be added to the invoice.

For schools or communities, we can supply free stuffing which needs to be picked up from 2 Healey Place, Gooseberry Hill.

This week we received a most welcome donation of \$500 from the **Fremantle Branch of Soroptimists International** whose goals lead toward a fairer life for women and girls everywhere. These generous funds enable us to cover the cost of the brown fine knit fabric which makes up the doll's body in the kit. These funds are raised through movie nights, bridge/mahjong days and stalls at local festivals where the dolls are displayed. Thank you, Soroptimists. You are a most appreciated partner.

NEW GROUP MEETING SOUTH OF THE RIVER, PERTH

For those living south of the River in Perth who would like to join a group meeting regularly, please phone Pauline Marlborough, mobile 041 9956392 or email to her on pauline.m@live.com.au

She may still be kicking up her heels in Vladivostock (Where on earth do dollmakers get to???) but when she returns it is highly likely that she and Marg Alcock will get you cutting out hundreds of doll's bodies for the kits or making dolls if you would like to join them. They intend to resume on March 21st, Mondays 10 - 12.

This new group includes dollmakers who were inspired by **Iris Whitelock and Aldy Bagnall's series of workshops in the Willagee Community Centre** and wanted to continue with the project. Thank you Iris and Aldy. By the way, their work with refugees in WA has now spread to the detention centres in Sydney and out of Melbourne. It is really with humility and sensitivity that we can offer the concepts which Uthando stand upon to be translated into other situations and cultures. A beautiful group of dolls came from an adult migrant student in English as a Second Language class. There are plans for our pattern to be adapted for an orphanage in Cambodia.

EVENTS EVERYWHERE

If you have stayed the distance to read this far, thank you. You will know that behind each sentence of this newsletter lies a chapter of purposeful human activity. Uthando Project makes its way into many corners of people's lives.

Only a brief description can be given here of what has happened and what is designed for the future.



KALAMUNDA ZIGZAG FESTIVAL: children dressing up "naked" dolls to go to Africa is a joyful thing.

AUGUSTA RIVER FESTIVAL; an example of what one woman, Bev Schroder can achieve with help on the day from Judy Mackintosh who travelled back on the bus to leave for Sweden the next morning.

GOOSEBERRY HILL GARDEN PARTY; where we launched our Recipe book and promptly sold 400 copies. Beautiful display of dolls set up by Lynne Tognolini surrounded by wonderful helpers. None left. Photo of the remarkable Jenn Maughan with her Crunchkin Puppet entralling more than the one little boy. Dr Julie Stone with sister-in law Pat on the garden bench.

CONFERENCE IN MELBOURNE: where Dr Julie Stone spoke so clearly about the possibilities within Uthando that many psychologists wanted to go further with her.

COMMISSIONS FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN ANIMALS DESIGNED BY KAY DAW; Luckily Kay doesn't sleep much which must be how she can design and make so many new animals for families enamoured of her beautiful animals. Other knitters are working with Kay's patterns on the poster and we enjoy seeing other knitters' interpretations to send to KZN.

SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS INTRODUCED TO UTHANDO. This is an ongoing process, always rewarding in that it brings in more dolls and shares more creativity often with those going through life's struggles.

MINANG MAINITCH INDIGENOUS WEAVING FESTIVAL where the Yorga Moorditj weavers passed on ideas with international weavers for folk to weave clothing for uthando dolls. What a combo! thank you to all through the Albany Museum. Trish Robinson writes: "...3000 visitors. I noticed, intimately, that the dolls became the personal touch for the weavers. some people naming them from their childhood history and others directly as persons. They were definitely a a valuable and individual thread to the whole project."

WAROONA EVENTS AND MEDIA through the most talented, directed and enthusiastic work of Nola Turner. If you live in this district please support Nola. nolaannette@bigpond.com

CURTIN UNIVERSITY CONFERENCE "GROWING UP SOLID" IN MAY

Many who receive this newsletter are professionally involved in working with children.

You could be very keen to find out more and enrol in a forthcoming conference called "**Growing Up Solid**", **May 12 - 14, 2011**.

Dr Lynn Priddis, Senior Lecturer in Clinical and Counselling Psychology within the Faculty of Health Sciences is coordinating this event with Elizabeth Seah, Chair of the Australian Association for Infant Mental Health, West Australian Branch. The theme is "Growing Up Solid; Integrating emotional and mental health throughout infancy, childhood and adolescence" which reflects the commitment to the integration of different professional, cultural and organisational approaches to treating mental illness in young people.

Please visit the website www.sapmea.asn.au/aaimhi&cap2011/

Email aaimhi2011@sapmea.asn.au

or to l.priddis@curtin.edu.au

Uthando Project is proud to participate with a display during this international conference.

Our website www.uthandoproject.org

Thank you for reading this lengthy newsletter. There is always so much to share in just the same way as we share our time our skills and our money to make and send dolls to the children of South Africa.

Photo; *Susan Gebbie with one of Kay Daw's heroic lions.*

With warm wishes and love from Georgia Efford, Coordinator and the magical Friday team who do all the thousand invisible tasks that allow the project to sail ahead.



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