



I welcomed the opportunity to experience a Canadian autumn and it was even more vibrant than I remember!

TRIBUTE TO NELSON MANDELA

“The moment South Africa has in many ways been dreading has come upon us and our Madiba has ended his long earthly walk to freedom. Nelson Mandela has died and South Africa is bereft. The country will never have a greater son, nor one who left a greater legacy. We need to pray that the values he sought to bequeath to us of forgiveness, reconciliation, large-heartedness, non-racialism and true democracy benefiting all should not be in any way compromised or abandoned but re-embraced with renewed commitment and deep resolve. If as a nation we can do this it will constitute the best expression of gratitude possible to this great man who has left our midst. We pray for our entire country at this time that stability, peace and a new sense of racial harmony will prevail.”

(Dr. Michael Cassidy-founder of African Enterprise - 6 December 2013)

Archbishop Desmond Tutu had this to say about his beloved Madiba...

“God was so good to us in South Africa by giving us Nelson Mandela to be our president at a crucial moment in our history. He inspired us to walk the path of forgiveness and reconciliation and so South Africa did not go up in flames. Thank you God for this wonderful gift, who became a moral colossus, a global icon of forgiveness and reconciliation. May He rest in peace and rise in glory.”

UPDATE

All eyes were on our nation in early December, when the state funeral of Nelson Mandela was broadcast internationally. It was a time in history when the International Community needed to acknowledge and celebrate the wonder of his life and the way this nation was turned around because of the commitment and sacrifice of such a man. There was a rainbow from our home to the Union Buildings that day.

So extensive were the line-ups to pay respects to Mr Mandela in specific places in the city of Pretoria, that though my friend Kathy and I stood for many hours, we never even managed to board one of the buses to the Union Buildings where his body was lying in state. Being in the queue - with people from every race and nation and experiencing the peace that prevailed - was in itself a once in a lifetime experience!

While Kathy was here in December from Switzerland, she was eager to meet some of the students, so we arranged a trip to the Bryanston Organic Market with Tshepo Phiri and Gibson Morobane. What a wonderful time it was!



Kathy with the boys

Earlier, in mid-September of 2013, I was totally energised by a long overdue 5 week trip to visit my family and friends in Canada. We had much to celebrate and I have joyful memories of special times! Some of the most notable were reconnecting with family and friends, finding my folks healthy and strong and dancing rock and roll with my 80 year old father at my niece's wedding reception... As well, I had a reunion with many of my friends who formed the original Hands of Joy committee at the home of Jeanne and Jory Kesten. And I met with Friends from the University Women's Club who have supported Hands of Joy over all these years.



Friends of Hands of Joy

I was also given the opportunity during the morning service at Islington Evangel Centre, to express my gratitude and share about the wonderful progress of some of the students who have been sponsored over the years.

In turn, they prayed that God would bless Hands of Joy in the future.

And while this was taking place in Canada, at Freedom Park in South Africa, there was an Exhibition of the Art works that were created to portray the hope of "Freedom from Human Trafficking" all during the week of Human Trafficking Awareness. Amazingly, this was the premier exhibition for the opening of the Freedom Park Art Gallery! It stretched over a month and enjoyed extensive media coverage. There were several functions attended by police, the public, interest groups and school children. Since the Exhibition continued, I was able to have a small Hands of Joy reunion there when I returned from Canada...The former Mrs United Nations demonstrated to us and a group of students from Mamelodi township how vulnerable children are to becoming victims.



Exhibition at Freedom Park

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Since the two girls, Patricia and Zanele have graduated from High School, Mthobisi is our only student at SSB School this year and he continues to be sponsored by the same family from the U.S. He is really appreciative and growing into a confident young man. His Mother Ntokozo, also returned to school last year and passed her Auxilliary Nursing qualification.

I had a lovely conversation with Mthobisi on the phone before Christmas, when he told me that he was staying in Mpumalanga over the holidays with his Granny and other relatives. Each day, they go hiking in the beautiful scenery and he enjoys taking photos. Although his phone has not been working except for messages, he has borrowed one for this time. His Mom somehow got him a lap top computer and he puts his photos on there. It's great to know he is out of the township of Diepsloot for awhile and away from his home. Mthobisi's step-father's disruptive behaviour makes life difficult for the family.



I prayed with Mthobisi

I prayed with him, reminding him that God does work through our prayers. We need to pray for his Mom Ntokozo, to find a Nursing job now that she has her qualification. Presently, she is volunteering with a housing organisation. Mthobisi is excited for this year and plans to work hard. In South Africa, Grade 11 is the year that University Entrance is based on. He has a genuine talent for singing and is a member of a choir that travels around the country.

PATRICIA AND ZANELE

I am pleased to announce that Patricia and Zanele passed well at SSB School and have each obtained University entrance. In January, just before this Academic year was about to begin, I was contacted by a distraught Zanele. She was accepted to study B. Comm. Accounting at Pretoria University but the financing she was depending on, did not materialize. There is a huge strain on the system at this point in time with thousands of students wanting to study. Most have little or no means of financing their studies.

Over the years, Zanele has been an excellent student. After 2 years at SSB, her marks were high and she obtained a scholarship for the next 3 years. Hands of Joy only needed to pay her transportation costs.

And now, she was desperate to begin University but without funding!

In a miraculous response to an urgent request I sent out, Hands of Joy received 2 donations on the same day! These will almost cover her school fees for this year. In the meantime, without my knowledge, Zanele's Mom and Granny both secured loans of R2,000 to accumulate enough funds for her to register before school opened – so eager was she to study. Funds for transportation or accommodation are still required but Zanele is extremely grateful and working hard.

When I questioned her sister Lebo about their resources, she explained; “My granny gets R1200 per month and my mother gets R2300 per month. The money is used for transport, monthly groceries and electricity bills. I have 3 siblings who are still at school and they all depend on the money for transport.”

Fortunately Lebo has returned to school to study Journalism. She writes: “After a few career counselling sessions, I was convinced to go for journalism as writing is what I am good at and I love it. I applied @ Tshwane University of Technology and my application was successful after writing a test and going for an interview.”

I was once registered with UNISA for LLB but didn't make it because of the weakness of studying alone. I am a dedicated, responsible and humble person. I do not take things for granted because I appreciate everything presented to me.

Journalism is a media profession that alerts people about the current affairs that are taking place around them in a written, video and visual form. I am a curious person and that is one of the aspects needed in journalism. I also love writing and I believe that I can do this.

I am also an active member of the new political party formed by Dr Mamphela Ramphele (Agang SA). Through this party, I have met a lot of journalists who motivated me.”

Sometime after this letter was written, Lebo was one of the fortunate few who received a government grant for study, accommodation and food. If her marks are good, she will only be required to pay back a portion.

ASHLEY AND TOMMY

During the past year, in exchange for money for food, Ashley taught 15 students for 2 months at a local high school in Cosmo City. Then, 6 of the students continued to attend even after the compulsory classes. They all passed well. One of the students, Tshepiso is now studying B.Comm Accounting at Damelin College and Ashley has promised to mentor her. This year, at the same High School, they want Ashley to start teaching again as soon as possible...

Another of the students named Silas, who lost his father, is keen to obtain a Diploma in Accounting and Ashley is asking; “Is there a way you can help maybe one of them who can't afford to go further?” And we are hoping this can be made possible.

Tommy is starting with his 2nd year in Accounting Studies at Wits University, after redoing two of his more difficult subjects. He continues to be sponsored by a private individual and we assist with money for transport.

Again this year, he will volunteer to teach younger students in Maths and Accounting during the after school program at Liberty Church in Cosmo City where he attends.

THE WEDDING

The wedding of Princess and Tshepo Machitele in December, was a milestone for Hands of Joy. And it was a most joyful occasion with several of the male students we sponsored in the past as part of the wedding party.

A big stumbling block to young couples getting married in South Africa, is the traditional practice of Lobola. Before they can be married, a bride price must be agreed on and



paid to the family. This creates huge pressure and fortunately in Tshepo's case, Princess', father was more in favour of their marriage and did not stipulate an outrageous amount for Lobola. Still, TShepo had to work hard to save extra money as he was eager to be married.

Traditionally, this lobola or bride price was negotiated for payment in cattle, so you can see just how far removed this practice is from life in a squatter camp like Diepsloot. The couple and their two children live next to her parents in crowded conditions.



Tshepo feeding his son

We are extremely thankful that in January this year, though she didn't have all of the necessary qualifications, Princess was hired to work at an upmarket Nursery School. What wonderful training she will receive! Her dream remains to study as well but for now, she needs to get used to her work requirements.

I am so proud of Tshepo, as he has plans to start a monthly Saturday School in his church for the many children who live nearby. He wants to broaden their horizons by teaching drumming, reading, dancing and to encourage them. Hands of Joy will assist him with feeding the children when they attend. As well, Tshepo wants to continue his monthly visits to orphan shelters for drumming workshops that were so successful last year.

I have a feeling our involvement will grow as the project develops.

He also plans to record a CD and has found a studio but still needs to complete all of the songs. When he is working full time at a local grocery store, he has hardly enough time but his talent, his heart for children and his spiritual energy are impressive.

TROUBADOURS

Two of our young men have applied and been accepted to study at YWAM in the Troubadours Program. YWAM stands for Youth With a Mission and is in the Cape Province in Worcester, where my friend Veronica lives with her family and operates her amazing "Treasure Kidz" program. The Troubadours is a 3-month Discipleship Training that offers a Creative Approach to learning using the students' artistic gifts and talents. Both boys are very talented. Duke who is Tshepo's younger brother, is a hip-hop dancer and was working for an NGO in Diepsloot. And Aubrey, who attended East Rand School for the Arts, is passionate about Drama. He has not been able to study further due to his family situation and lack of finances.



Duke and Aubrey

The boys filled out copious forms with my assistance and the medical expertise of Dr. Sonia who has been so generous of her time with the students since Riversands days. One section required a personal statement about their relationship with God and reasons for wanting to do the program.

I wanted to include Aubrey's to give you some insight;

"My first encounter with God happened with a very life threatening experience. Due to the very violent environment in Diepsloot, I survived a stab wound on the neck. A fight broke out where my close friend was involved. I had to protect him but ended up in a coma, it was believed that I would not survive this encounter. The doctors predicted that due to the severe bruise the chances of survival were very slim.

My friends and family held a long prayer for me

pleading to God for my life. Through the grace and love, he granted me a second chance in life. To live and glorify him for the rest of my life.

The very same year I got involved in a car accident. I was the only one injured. I prayed to the heavenly father for healing and I recovered in a short space of time. He has given me a lot of chances in life, so I could be an instrument of his glory and love. Today I breathe and live through him.

I applied for this school to explore my faith in God with no distractions, use my talents to help out wherever possible. Glorify and live a Godly life as he has given a lot of chances to get closer to him. I thirst to have space with my father and would appreciate having a close relationship with him. This school will help me reinstall him in my life and live by his word. As a talented young actor, I have studied drama in high school and it is my dream to use this talent to benefit his word.”

The duration of the course is three months after which some of the students will fly to Brazil during the Soccer World Cup to practice what they have learned.

This would be a wonderful opportunity for Duke and Aubrey but the funds will need to be raised. They will also have an opportunity to do a course in Media Studies which would give them some more practical skills in the world of Media Arts. Thandie’s daughter was sponsored to attend this same course years ago and she has recently been promoted from Gospel TV Producer to Station Manager.

ABEL AND EMMANUEL

I am delighted to report that Abel has successfully completed his Honours Degree and moved into the Master’s Program!!! We are so proud of him and thankful to Johan, Graham and Yonande at NLA for sponsoring him. In return, Abel has become a valued and respected employee with their firm. During school holidays, that is where you will find him.

His friend Emmanuel has recently married a musician named Ellen and been appointed to a full time position in the Architecture Department at the University. He will soon be finished his PhD. I value the examples and input of both these young men in the lives of the students we sponsor. They are exceptional role models!

JONAS’ NEW FAMILY

Since we met 17 years ago at Riversands when Jonas was 11 years old, I have seen him through many difficult and challenging times. He never knew his father and his mother died when he was in his early teens. It was difficult for him to cope after losing his mother...So we arranged for him to go on a skills training course and receive counselling at the Youth for Christ Base in Lenasia. During this time, his uncle rented out the shack that was home to Jonas and his mother.

He and another young man named Zephaniah, are the very first students Hands of Joy sponsored to high school. Jonas is a very determined young man and was convinced that the boys couldn’t attend the local high school as the older boys had knives and weren’t afraid to use them! This is how we discovered the East Rand School for the Arts and we have been sponsoring students with wonderful results, ever since. After High School, Jonas has been working and taking care of himself. Fortunately, he was given a house in Cosmo City when families were moved from their “temporary” shacks in Zevenfontein Squatter Camp. After 8 years of temporary residence for 800 families, there were around 8,000 families that lived there, still with no infrastructure.

A few years ago when he was 25, Jonas was contacted by a man named Gerson who lives in Pretoria and works at the head office of Correctional Services in I.T.. He announced that he was actually Jonas’ brother and that he also had a sister living nearby. They grew up with their father who had been separated from Jonas” Mother, and he died recently.

They wanted to meet Jonas and it seemed to be the right time.

How amazing is this story??? And it gets better as Jonas goes to visit often and spends Christmas with his family. His brother even lets Jonas drive!

In January, while Jonas was in Pretoria, he told me that he wanted to come for a visit.

Over an enjoyable lunch at our home I was able to meet Gerson and hear the remarkable story. I really couldn’t hide my delight...Gerson is a solid man who treats Jonas well and Jonas feels incredibly blessed to have a “real family.”



Gerson and Jonas

CONCLUSION

There are more stories to tell but I will allow them to develop and share them in my next newsletter... This year of 2014 promises to be an adventure and I am filled with anticipation about the new things that are happening! Please note my new email address louannyoung7@gmail.com

I pray this will a year filled with wonder and adventure for each of you as well. We continue to be grateful for all of the provisions that come in the most unexpected ways and for those of you who support us with prayer and finances. There are always more deserving students who need the opportunity to receive a quality education and be nurtured in their lives and faith.

Thank you for responding and May God bless you....

Lou Ann

HANDS OF JOY - MISSION STATEMENT

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

To sponsor Christian students who show potential, to attend special High Schools. The aim being to establish a fund that can provide continuing sponsorship for gifted, responsible students in both Art and Academics to achieve a superior secondary and possibly tertiary education and qualification. Ongoing sponsorship will depend on the student's individual performance during each academic year.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

- Social, Emotional and Spiritual support for current and former students sponsored by Hands of Joy.
- Funding Skills Development and Skills Transfer.
- Identifying Potential New Students for Sponsorships in Future.

HANDS OF JOY is a registered charitable organization. If you wish to contribute to it, please contact:

SOUTH AFRICA

Lou Ann Young
PO Box 331
Groenkloof, Pretoria
0027



Phone: 012 344 0235
Email: louannyoung7@gmail.com

South African Charitable Registration Number:
084-988-NPO

CANADA

Natascha Witt
591 Manchester Road,
Kitchener Ontario
N2B 1B2



Phone: 519-895-8855
Email: withhandsofjoy@gmail.com

Canada Charitable Registration Number:
889459392 RR001