

ITHEMBA TRUST'S QUARTERLY

NEWSLETTER







A NOTE FROM KITTY

Kitty Phillips, Founder, iThemba Trust

So, the crazy Corona year has come to an end... I say that but at the same time we celebrate that our school finished the year with discipline in all areas of protocols and many bottles of sanitizer, with a clear record of no staff or learner infected! As many schools had to close their year early, due to this pandemic, OGS finished strong with 100% attendance and health. Thank you Lord for your faithful hand upon us.

Even the weather seems to have been affected by the turmoil the world finds its self in, but we have a strong anchor that holds us firm and safe in the turbulent waters of the seasons.

As I write these thoughts, I hear the din of happy voices and laughter as the students enjoy the warm sunshine and atmosphere of the last day of school. The water slide is bringing shouts of delight and excitement. The Grader is droning in the back ground preparing our sport field for us to sow grass seed and we wait in anticipation for the rain to water the seed.

The analogies always warm my heart. Ploughing and preparing the land, finding good soil and planting seeds, awaiting life giving water to water it and then comes the eventual signs of growth. As Ithemba's motto says, "we do not measure our success by the fruit we see, but by the seeds we sow."

Daily I am encouraged to come and see another life, another heart being changed by the work of our hands at Orange Grove. Children and adults come and go, but my prayer always is that their lives have received some form of seed that will take root and grow into a steadfast tree, whose roots go down deep into the water of Life, His name is Jesus – our HOPE and our future. That they will be able to stand firm in their convictions of the good soil they have been planted and nurtured in, to stand against the storms of life and flourish.

Thank you to our family, our sponsors, who continue to believe in the work we are doing at Orange Grove. For all the encouragement and financial support we receive, we don't take you or your contribution for granted.

We wish you and your family a blessed Christmas season and together we pray for a great 2021 and ask that you believe with us for momentum and that the best is yet to come.









HERITAGE DAY CONTINUED

In a country as diverse as South Africa, this is a valuable opportunity to share and learn to value other cultural groups. As we celebrate each other's heritage, we learn to celebrate and value all our differences. This, in turn, brings greater understanding and acceptance within our community.



TOWN CLEAN UP

Our Grade one teacher (Mia Louw) and a few of our hostel learners initiated a litter clean up on the Orange Grove road into the town of Tarkastad. Every Tuesday ,Wednesday and Thursday they spent two hours picking up litter on the side of the road to make the road look beautiful and clean again. Well done to all the learners for being so motivated and helping Aunty Mia despite some very hot Summer days.



THE JOURNEY

The Journey is a year long discipleship program started by Ted Greenland, designed to be a journey of intentional leadership, growth and mentorship with a select group of students. Despite obvious interruptions, the group still managed to engage in weekly discussions and engaging conversation, deepening their faith and identity as leaders. As a result, some of the students even decided to be baptized, as an obedient, and public declaration of their faith. After a conclusive, 'grand finale' weekend away early next year, our prayer is that the Journey will continue, even beyond the limits of the program's timeline.





2020 has been an incredibly challenging year for all of our students, with the disruptions of a nationwide Lock Down, and emergency distance learning, Many of our students had additional challenges in this time, as most did not have reliable access to WIFI or sufficient data available to download any form of video or other educational content. However, we learnt as we went along, with many activities sent out via short WhatsApp messages! Fortunately, the ACE curriculum allowed us to send work home to each student, and they were able to carry on at their own speed, until we were able to reopen in July.

As a result of the commitment shown by both our teaching staff, our students, and their parents, the majority of our school managed to complete almost all the work they were supposed to do this year, and are on track to continue well next year!

A very exciting new development is the launch of Comprehend Africa, an online version of the ACE curriculum, developed especially for African students by AEE. All of our Grade 4 to 7 students who have shown self-motivation and are currently coping well academically, will begin in January to do their Math, English and Science through this new platform. We are very excited to be able to offer our children an opportunity like this! We'd also like to acknowledge that this has been made possible by our generous sponsors, who have provided us with computers for our students to use.

As challenging as 2020 has been, it has also been a year during which we were reminded to look to God each day for guidance and wisdom, and as a community, we have grown closer together through the challenges. We are so grateful to be able to say that we came through the year with just one staff member testing positive for COVID, and that we were able to re-open our school so successfully after our initial Lock Down.

We held our annual Pre - School prize giving on Friday 27th of November where our preschoolers performed the *Jerusalema* dance. Many prizes were awarded. Well done to all the preschoolers for working hard this year.

Our senior prize giving took place on Wednesday the 2nd of December. Several awards were received such as highest achievers in each grade, Honour Rolls and Character Trait awards. Thanks to all the Orange Grove staff on a fantastic and successful 2020 despite its challenges. A big congratulations to the prize winners for 2020 and all the learners who worked hard and received well deserved results.

This term, the Pre- School held an occupation day in which learners had to come dressed to school in what they want to become one day. We had many creative outfits arriving at the school for the day, from princesses to doctors, builders, dancers, farmers and even an engineer. Let's hope the their dreams will be fulfilled one day!















Due to the pandemic, we were very restricted as to which sports we could play but nevertheless we started with non- contact sports in term 4 adhering to all regulations. To get the students active and outdoors, we managed to play some tennis, netball and soccer this term. Much to the delight of the students we started with very basic swimming lessons as well.

Well done to Liya for receiving Sportsman of the year and Samki for Sportswoman of the year.

HORSE RIDING

Horse Riding started on a high note as usual .In Term 4 we focussed on doing obstacle courses (steering horses), walking and trotting the horses and some learners even learnt to canter on a horse.

For the last lesson of the term learners were taken for an outride on the school property - one of their favourite things to do . Well done to all the learners for always trying their best, the horses love all the cuddles and treats.

ARCHERY

After a disruptive middle of the year, we were allowed to reopen our archery club and get back to shooting arrows during the last term. After not being able to do sport for so long, our young archers threw themselves right back into it and we had an excellent turnout and it was a great opportunity to recap the basics and make sure our form was still good. We had to adjust quite a few of our compound archer's bows – clearly lockdown had not stopped them from growing. The cherry on the cake for many was archery tag, a game in which you shoot arrows that look like they have big marshmallows on their ends at each other. We ended the term with an epic team contest and sent our archers home with a lot of tall stories about their archery wars, as well as the odd bump and bruise to remind them that the battle is real – sort of.

















BACK2NATURE

After going online for so long, it was good to be able to get together again and touch, feel and observe the real thing. With spring in the air, we experimented with pressing flowers and studied their anatomy, went for walks and practiced a spot of bird watching. The focus of the last term for our older students was field trips and a tree project. Each student had to produce a poster about a specific tree of their choice so that we could all learn from one another's trees. We truly have some fascinating and unique trees in Southern Africa.

Every student from grade 2 and up had the opportunity to go on a field trip. Our field trip to the Ruth Lock Shell Art Gallery in Queenstown was a fascinating insight into how one can be creative with natural materials and a passion to show off God's handiwork. The trip to the Mountain Zebra Park was on a scorching hot day but we nonetheless got to see a variety of different animal, bird and plant species before enjoying ice-cold milkshakes and a burger. Six of our students were rewarded for their dedication to all their assignments and enthusiasm for nature with a trip to Storms River Mouth in the Garden Route National Park. There we were able to walk the first part of the Otter Trail, see some beautiful indigenous forest and watch dolphins and whales from our cottage.

The little ones (grade 1 and below) did not do projects or research a tree and this gave us an opportunity to spend some quality time together, practicing the use of binoculars, going for walks, and having some interesting discussions about things like the weather. We did go on a game drive with them, which included a picnic in the riverbed and lots of splashing stones in puddles.

Our gratitude goes out to the Mzuri Wildlife Foundation who sponsored the entire B2N course this year and enabled our students to share in these fun and formative experiences.



EXPLORER'S CAMP

Six intrepid Explorers had the privilege of going on a camp in the foothills of the Drakensberg where Ted Greenland who ran our Explorers program now lives. Despite a lot of rain, our Explorers got to experience some absolutely spectacular countryside and had many adventures. The first day was all about constructing their shelter on a platform in the river. After a slightly damp night (it rained a lot!) they baked bread in a stone oven before hiking out and enjoying a delicious meal in a cave beneath a waterfall. On the way back, they explored another cave where they got up close and personal with horseshoe bats. Then it was time to saddle up and head out in the mist for an overhang full of San rock art where they had to make a bed of grass, a fire and windbreaks before settling down to an exhausted sleep. The next morning, after examining some more rock art, Ted gave them a riddle which, if they solved it, would lead them to a treasure. Much of the day was taken up following clues that led them back to another cave in which was hiding some items handcrafted by Ted and his wife Beth. The only catch was you had to venture alone into the last part of the cave to retrieve your treasure. Four of the Explorers returned home with their prize. Well done to them!

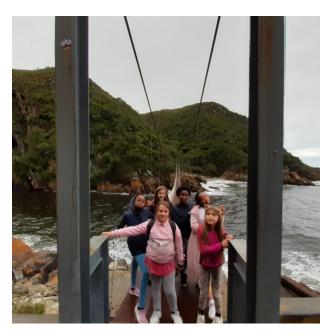
Much thanks to Ted and Beth for hosting us and putting together a camp full of adventure and survival skills, not to mention great food. We are also very grateful to the Mzuri Wildlife Foundation who sponsored most of the cost of the individuals who attended the camp. Thank you MWF for making this camp possible for us!















ORANGE GROVE FARMS

Gardening has been a challenge this term. The staff are very creative with the implements we have. We also had a short but devastating hail storm. Thankfully the potatoes, cauliflower and cabbages were still young and have managed to recover. The spinach and beetroot have started to sell and we're still looking forward to a bumper summer crop. We had to retrench the ground staff but they have chosen to tend the garden without pay and will take a cut of profits in the new year. We are truly blessed to have loyal committed staff willing to make sacrifices.

One of our dreams is to have a fully grassed athletics track and full sized sports field. An old farrow land was earmarked for this purpose. We recently had the opportunity to hire a grader at a reasonable rate and managed to level the first half of the field. We'll start planting grass shortly in anticipation of a beautiful green sports field in the years to come.

Our bee team consists of Inathi, Obu and Linomtha. Linomtha being the most enthusiastic for which he received an award at the final year awards ceremony. He surely deserves this even after being the recipient of many bee stings!

The bee program has done very well this season, but due to the drought we missed one harvest. Our hives are slowly increasing and our apiary is nearly at its maximum for the area. We now have 8 hives in the apiary and 2 catch boxes in other locations. Our first harvest was in 2018 with only 7 bottles of honey harvested. Our most recent harvest was 66 bottles! We are looking forward to expand to other areas thereby increasing our Bee team in the future.

A NOTE FROM ANGELA

Angela Price, Co-Founder, iThemba Trust

Ithemba Trust is like a tap root. A tap root is the primary, dominant root system from which other roots sprout laterally. It develops from a radical of an embryo. The primary function of this root is anchorage. During harsh conditions, the tap root pushes down in search for more nutrients and water in order to survive – this usually happens in the early stages of development so that when the hard times come, it remains nourished with stored food. Ithemba was formed from an embryo/seed which was initially Kitty (Founder) and Ang (Co-Founder) and then Tanya Jernigan who sowed the very first seed of finance which opened the door for more finance to flow (formation of 501©3 organisation, under the Jernigan Foundation) and then very first building on Orange Grove. Ever since then, the tap root of Ithemba has provided stability and anchored the vision despite very trying circumstances of the past 18 years. We firmly believe that God is showing us that this root never changes and has gone down deep. It contains the DNA of the vision which will be contained in a legacy that will be carried forward by our children. They are the lateral roots that have sprout from the main root. This all happens under the ground and is not always visible to others, therefore causes confusion. They do not understand the process of the growth and development of the roots over the years. However, on the surface the plant has grown and borne fruit. Seed falls and other plants are established that in turn put down their tap roots under the protection of the main plant from the harsh environment. Sometimes they flourish and sometimes they wither and die but the main plant and root systems have remained.

This piece speaks volumes to the analogy above:

There must be deep roots to keep a mass (tree/plant) upright. On calm days these roots simply provide nutrition from deep below, but when the storm comes, they hold it firm and anchored - immovable. After a storm, there is a calm, and it is your deep rootedness that will carry you through. You cannot gain height without deep roots and while growth above the ground is the visible part, it is often the less important. Winds of time do take their toll - we lose bits of ourselves along the way and become shaped but far from being damaged, such a process gives us our essential character and uniqueness.

Choosing the correct place to plant is critical, as even the hardiest plants when young are vulnerable. The environment it is in, gives it the capacity to grow deep roots and a strong trunk. So, when the storms come, it has been protected by the giants around it (Ithemba), gradually growing up into the wind, prepared for the day when it will stand tall and catch the wind and flourish.



@ithemba_trust @orangegrove_schools



KITTY PHILLIPS **FOUNDER**



CO-FOUNDER





www.ithemba4hope.org www.orangegrove.org.za