

DECEMBER 2023

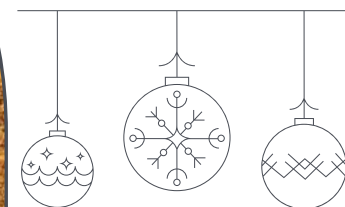
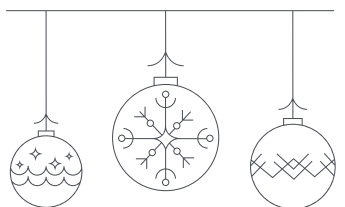
Q4 NEWS



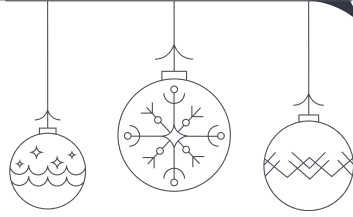
# NEWSLETTER



## SUMMER 2023



## WELCOME FROM THE FOUNDER



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### *Season's Greetings*

As the year wraps up, we take a moment to look back and bask in the warm glow of all that's happened, this gives us hope for an expectant future.

Back in 2002, when God gave me the vision for this, He whispered, "Don't underestimate small beginnings." And here we are today, marvelling at every twist and turn of this epic journey- the growth, the changes, the countless blessings- all orchestrated by Him.

We have an amazing team, that I am so grateful for "I'll build you like living stones," says 1 Peter 2v5, and that's exactly what we are—a community, united by a shared goal. From building homes to planting food gardens, harvesting water and creating a self-sustainable farm, it's all coming together, just as God promised.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Ithemba Trust team, OGS staff and board members, and our sponsors, family, and friends. Your steadfast support and dedication have enabled us to accomplish what once seemed impossible.

My heart is full and overflowing at the favour and goodness of God.

**Kitty Phillips**



# ITHEMBA NEWS





"True spirituality that is pure in the eyes of our Father God is to make a difference in the lives of the orphans, and widows in their troubles, and to refuse to be corrupted by the world's values."

JAMES 1:27 (TPT)



Lwellyn: in black t-shirt with his foster parents



Lwellyn: second from left (front row)

According to the University of Cape Town's Children Count statistics in 2022, South Africa has approximately 2.8 million orphans, with over a million being maternal or double orphans. KwaZulu Natal (719,000) and the Eastern Cape province (458,000) have the highest number of orphans.

In response to this crisis, *Duncan*, our OGS Board Chairman, and his wife *Dee* welcomed *Lwellyn* into their home as foster parents after the young boy was left orphaned following his father's death in August 2023. Given that our province has the second-largest number of orphans in the country, OGS embraced *Lwellyn* into the school environment where he is receiving love, education, and mentorship. His integration into the school has been seamless.

# Visitors...

In October we were blessed to receive a group of education students from High Point University (HPU) in North Carolina, USA, along with *Dr. Tara Shollenberger* (Assistant Professor of Leadership Studies) and *Dr. Hilary Tank* (Assistant Professor). This is the second time that a group of students from HPU have visited us. This group of passionate and compassionate students dedicated their time and efforts to make a positive impact in the lives of our young learners. Through various activities and educational initiatives, the High Point students aimed to inspire and empower the children. The experience was not only transformative for the students but also for the children they interacted with, fostering cross-cultural understanding and creating lifelong memories. This remarkable initiative showcases the power of education and the profound difference it can make in the lives of those who need it most. We look forward to another visit next year and fostering this special relationship. Below is one of the many testimonies we received from the HPU students.



**Dr. Tara Shollenberger**  
*Assistant Professor of  
Leadership Studies:  
High Point University  
North Carolina, USA*



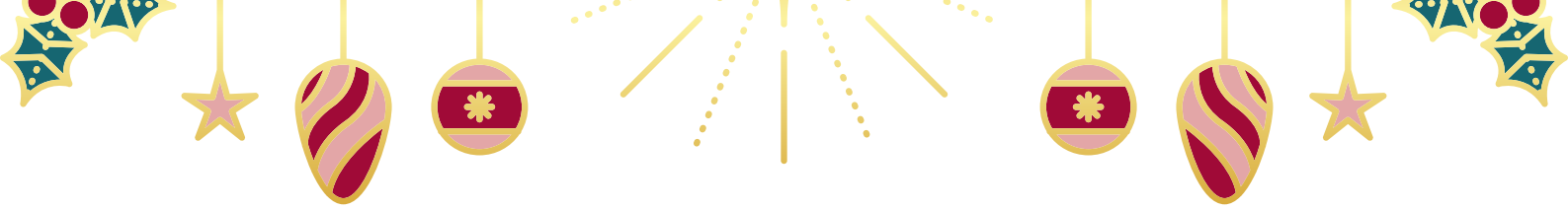
Orange Grove School changed my life. The message, the students, the staff, and the experience touched me in a way I NEVER expected. As a teacher I learned so much about students and their ability to hold themselves accountable and drive themselves if encouraged and steered in the right direction. Just walking in as a female in her 20s who has a passion for children and education I wasn't expecting the kindest and most respectful children I have met in my young life.

Having a younger brother with a 10 year age gap I have been around a lot of children in my personal life outside the schooling and professional aspects and the kids at OGS have some of the kindest and warmest hearts even though many of them who we were blessed to spend more time with after school hours were not from fortunate families in the way on monetary wealth and some not even in the way of familial wealth. I don't think I have ever seen a closer group of children in my entire life. Not when I was growing up and not now even in my classroom and I just find it amazing and world changing what OGS has ingrained into its students.

I hope and pray that these students go out and spread what they are learning across the world. I will never feel the same as I did before arriving at OGS and I most definitely will never look at things or think the same and I am beyond thankful for that. It is hard to put into words the emotions I experienced while being at Orange Grove and it is even harder to truly place everything I learned and have taken away from my experience into the right words to explain to someone what OGS is like. It is truly an experience I will never forget and one I wish everyone could experience.



**Mackenzie Lambeth**  
*Elementary Education: High Point University  
North Carolina, USA*





We have had a full year of visitors and hearts have been connected across the Atlantic Ocean. Visitors to Orange Grove are always warmly welcomed and encouraged to experience the incredible atmosphere here and witness the dedication of our staff and the growth of our children both spiritually and academically. *Jason and Mandy Willingham* from Houston along with their longstanding friends, *Tinus and Retah McPherson* from Stellenbosch in South Africa paid us a visit while on safari. *Retah*, former Mrs South Africa, is an author and public speaker who travels extensively around the world as an ambassador of the kingdom of God to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

An accident in 2004 set in motion a series of events that would change their lives forever. *Retah* scaled down on her professional occupation and went into full-time ministry. We felt so privileged as she spoke to our seniors on dreaming about their lives and making it become a reality. They all spent time in prayer thereafter. It was truly very special and we hope that our paths cross again soon.



We extend a warm round of applause to our sponsors and donors who have been unwavering in their support towards our mission. Your contributions have been instrumental in propelling our team forward, paving the way for our students to achieve remarkable feats. We look forward to continuing this partnership, working collaboratively to help our students reach their full potential.



To all iTHEMBA TRUSTEES

I have not often visited schools that left an echo in my heart.  
"This is not what you see Retah, this is more than what they explain to you, more than what they show you. Look carefully, listen carefully, and look closely into the children's eyes."

So, who are the children in the school?  
Most of them survived very hard circumstances, and still face them every day.  
Some of their eyes said to me - "Mam, I am just a child in need, and so thankful for this safe haven." The smile on their faces shows their hearts that bloom in this safe, beautiful environment. They are not judged, but taught in gentleness.

Who are the parents?  
I cannot speak for every child and parent, but what I saw was that most of these children come from very broken families. My heart jumped with joy as I saw how many of these children were rescued from harsh environments. They do not disgrace the parents - the school is just a graceful bridge for the parents and children in times where they cannot provide for the children themselves.

Who are the teachers?  
I looked at humble people with huge hearts.  
The children silently look into their loving eyes and see their true value.

Who are the donors?  
People that definitely don't live for themselves.  
**I believe it is better to give than to receive.**  
And I could clearly understand this principle while walking around the school grounds.  
You don't give because of what you saw and experienced, you give because you have so much grace and love in your heart for those that are in need.

Who am I?  
Just someone that wants to look into your eyes today and say "THANK YOU VERY MUCH!"

Your contributions means so much to the people.  
Africa loves you and iTHEMBA TRUST says we appreciate you!

Retah McPherson  
30 November 2023







# OOGS NEWS

# PRESCHOOL NEWS



Photo: Canva



This year at Orange Grove Pre-School has been incredibly enjoyable. We explored an array of themes, including sports, personal hygiene, transportation, and occupations. Our morning circle routines involved engaging conversations about these themes, followed by various fun-filled activities and art projects related to the topics. Our Grade-R classroom made significant progress in sports this term, mastering basic skills in tennis, mini-cricket, and soccer. To culminate our exciting year, the entire preschool participated in a memorable concert, where all the kiddies were celebrated as superstars and thoroughly enjoyed themselves.



"You formed my innermost being, shaping my delicate inside and my intricate outside, and wove them all together in my mother's womb."

**Psalms 139: 13 (TPT)**





# ACADEMIC NEWS

ORANGE GROVE  
SCHOOLS  
ACADEMIC

# Classroom news

This term marked an exciting milestone for Orange Grove with the launch of the "Foundational Education" class, which aimed to address a long-standing need. The class, taught by *Sam Heath*, focused on aiding three students who required additional support to catch up with their studies. Witnessing the students' enthusiasm for learning was a remarkable experience.

The Grade 2 and 3 classes delivered a stunning performance at the Old Age Home. The audience was captivated by the students' rendition of Psalm 139 and the story of David and Goliath. The residents of the Home thoroughly enjoyed the show, making it an unforgettable experience. On that note, our school choir received the honor of performing at the Dutch Reformed Church Christmas Service.

We also celebrated the graduation of *Ethan Wait*, our first "Thoroughbred" graduate. The ACE system defines a Thoroughbred as a student who has been at a particular school from Gr R to Gr 12. We are incredibly proud of Ethan's achievements and wish him the best of luck in his future endeavours. We hope to welcome him back to our Media Centre next year.

*Sebastian Bryant* won 1st prize in the Screen Smart competition out of over 350 entries across the schools in the Eastern Cape. Draw a picture of the world in 3000! He won R500 worth of art equipment and a screen smart course for his whole Grade.



It has been a fruitful year, with many of our aspirations coming to fruition. We would like to express our gratitude to our Heavenly Father for guiding us every step of the way!

# Awards Ceremony

**Administrator's Award:** It was a gratifying experience to present the Administrator's Award to a deserving Grade 12 student this year. Despite having only one graduating senior, *Ethan Wait* proved to be a meritorious recipient for this honour, demonstrating commendable character, upstanding values, and exceptional servant leadership within both the school and community.

**Principal's Award:** This year's recipient has demonstrated exceptional resilience and dedication throughout his academic career. Over the past 12 years, he consistently demonstrated improvement in his academic performance despite the increasing complexity of the coursework. In addition to his academic pursuits, he generously offered his time and service to various school activities, serving as the Worship Team leader and House Captain for Gemsbok. As a senior student, he held the prestigious positions of Head Boy and also contributed to the IT department, skillfully maintaining our computer network. His unwavering commitment, coupled with a demonstration of Godly character, has earned him the distinction of being the first Thoroughbred student to receive this award. It is an honour to recognise *Ethan Wait* as this year's recipient of the Principal's Award.

**Final Assembly:** *Dr. Thulelah Blessing Takane*, an Education Specialist with a Ph.D. in Primary Mathematics Education, graced us with her presence as the guest speaker for our final assembly and prize giving ceremony. A native of our hometown, she delivered an inspiring message to our students, based on Psalm 139, that reminded them of their innate goodness and unique value as children of God.

Though we had to bid farewell to some students, we are excited to welcome new ones in 2024.



Dedicate your children to God and point them in the way that they should go, and the values they've learned from you will be with them for life.

PROVERBS 22:6

# Media news

Congratulations on a fantastic year! This term, the majority of our students successfully completed their coding courses, with a handful of exceptional students completing more than one course. Our younger students diligently progressed at a steady pace, acquiring fundamental knowledge of various platforms. Chess also continued throughout the term and remained a favored activity among many of our students.



# Skills program

Our skilled youngsters have concluded this year on a remarkable note. *Liya* had the privilege of participating in a two-week endurance horse racing training camp. During this time, he gained valuable experience in training and caring for endurance horses. In addition, he successfully competed in a 40km race, yielding outstanding results. On the other hand, *Linomtha* continued to excel in his chicken farming venture, and his hard work was recognized. He also participated in several property projects throughout the term, earning commendation for his efforts.



We look forward to 2024 where there are some exciting changes and developments waiting for our skills' leaders.

# SPORTS & CULTURE







This year at Orange Grove School, we commenced the sporting calendar with cricket, athletics, and a few games of tennis. We then progressed to hockey, soccer, cross country, and netball. Our school participated in matches against other schools, including Cradock Pre-Primary, Tarka Primary, Hangklip, Balmoral, Cradock Primary, and Winterberg School Trust. A highlight was when our U10 hockey team won the Best Team of the Day award at the Yellowwoods hockey tournament.

The Eastern Province Regional Cross Country event hosted by OGS was also a great success, with approximately 12 of our athletes qualifying for Nationals. We sent six of our athletes, and all performed exceptionally well, with *Amo Smouse* receiving a silver medal and achieving her Nationals colours for two years in a row.

In term four, we focused mainly on athletics, while still playing mini-cricket and hockey. Our team participated in the Regional athletics event in Port Elizabeth, with seven athletes placing in the top ten overall athletes of the day. OGS won the day overall with the most points.

We had many learners qualify for Nationals but decided not to send a team to the National Athletics this year. Our most significant event of the year was the Inter-schools athletics hosted by Orange Grove school, with nine schools and about 300 athletes participating. We had a few challenges during the event, but Hangklip won the day overall.

Our mini-cricketers also played a few matches during the year, with both teams only losing one match in the last tournament. We are proud of all our athletes who demonstrated excellence in batting, bowling, and fielding.

During the 2023 sporting year, we played many inter-house matches, including hockey, soccer, netball, athletics, swimming, and more. Congratulations to Kudu for winning the 2023 sporting year and the House Trophy.

Well done to all our athletes for demonstrating great sportsmanship throughout the year.



Remember, "The only one who can tell you that you can't win is you, and you don't have to listen."

# 2023 SPORTS AWARD WINNERS

Junior Sportsman of the year : **Junior Smouse**

Junior Sportswoman of the year : **FJ Solani**

Senior Sportsman of the year: **Sabelo Mabece**

Senior Sportswoman of the year : **Amo Smouse**



# OUTDOOR NEWS





# Back 2 Nature...



We'd like to say a huge thank you to the Mzuri Wildlife Foundation who sponsor our B2N course and have made it possible for our students to learn the things they have and enjoy the experiences they've had.



# ...Back 2 Nature

After taking our older students to Hogsback last term, our younger Back to Nature students got to visit this spectacular part of our country for themselves this term. We had a lot of fun exploring waterfalls, identifying trees and birds that don't occur in our area and enjoying the very different scenery. The grade 1's and R's had a day excursion to a nearby farm where we went fossil hunting. Although we didn't find any spectacular skulls, we did find a few little bones and learned about where to look for fossils. Between our field trips, we learned about photosynthesis and the solar system and finally wrote a test on what we'd learned this year.

## Archery

We started off the term with two of our archers attending the National Indoor competition in Port Elizabeth. The competition is shot at various venues across South Africa and the scores collected and collated. They both did very well and *Amo Smouse* managed to get the gold medal in her category out of all the archers in the country. We spent much of the term focusing on learning to shoot further distances—and losing quite a few arrows in the process—as we are planning to start competing in outdoor events next year. Finally, all our archers competed in a 'knock out challenge'. Again, *Amo Smouse*, showed her skill by winning the top spot. Well done to *Sebastian Bryant* for coming second!



# Staff news

The staff celebrated a wonderful evening of fun and bowls at their end of year function. White or Bright was the theme and many laughs were had on the bowling green as some had never played the game before. After the bowls we enjoyed snacks and a wonderful dinner with encouraging words from the leadership team. We ended the evening with delicious pavlova, ice cream and berries, while bidding farewell to our beloved Grade 1 Supervisor and Head of Sport, *Mia King*, who is off to teach at nearby Winterburg School.

We are excited to welcome *Leon Venter* and *Ayola Siquhaza* to our team. *Leon* will impart valuable woodworking skills, while *Ayola* will provide a new range of options to the Skills Development Program next year.



# Alumni news

*Bobo Mate*, a talented self-taught artist and one of our previous students, recently attended a 7-hour workshop on graphic pencil art. The workshop was conducted by renowned international pencil artist, *Pieter van der Merwe*. It covered graphite as a fine-art medium, exploring pencils and drawing equipment, papers, and other materials. Attendees were taught various drawing and mark-making techniques, as well as blending methods, including some lesser-known tips and tricks. In addition, the workshop also focused on marketing oneself as an artist. Below is a summary of Bobo's experience, both in terms of his reflections and artistic output.

“

It was an incredible experience which I will forever cherish. For the first time ever, I gathered with a large group of artists and got to meet with the world renown artist Pieter van de merwe. He taught us many important techniques which I never knew about my medium of art. We learned the importance of patience while working with graphite and how to handle it to create better art. He shared some of his testimony and how he made it in the industry. What's more awesome is how many new friends I got make that day. It was an awesome experience I felt blessed to be apart of. Thank you for making it all possible, it's a day I'll keep with me forever.



**Bobo Mate** (right)  
OGS Alumni



## Christmas Poem *by Joanna Fuchs*

Practice Jesus

If we practiced Jesus every way,

It'd be like Christmas every day;

If we, like Him, were meek and mild

And loved each woman, man and child,

If we'd read our Bible, it'd remind us,

So that every single day would find us

More and more in sweet accord

With our sweet Jesus—Master, Lord.

Then every day that we're alive

Would be like December 25.

*Wishing you Happy Holidays*

*Kitty, Ang, & Tanya*

Photo: Canva





IF YOU HAVE ANY INTEREST IN JOINING THE ITHEMBA SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM, PLEASE CONTACT ANGELA AT [ITHEMBATRUST@GMAIL.COM](mailto:ITHEMBATRUST@GMAIL.COM)

WE HAVE A NUMBER OF CHILDREN ON OUR WAITING LIST AVAILABLE FOR SPONSORSHIP AND SUPPORT.



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