

# NET VIR PRET

## PROGRESS REPORT - OCTOBER 2021

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Recycled work from the Craft Studio

### New Building

We are delighted to report that construction of the new building is now complete – but not without difficulties. A major problem arose three weeks into construction when the builder informed us that the architect had not taken into account the basic fact that we were building on a slope. The architect said he'd forgotten. His proposal was to build a huge retaining wall around the building area which would be filled with compacted earth to keep the three rooms on the same level. When after a week and a half of trying this it became clear that the wall was not going to be able to bear the weight, it had to be torn down and the architect then amended his



plans to follow the slope. Unfortunately, this episode added four weeks to the estimated building time and pushed up costs significantly.

However, at least the building is up and we were able to use it to provide an additional three work spaces for our **Winter Holiday School** in July.

Although we were under Covid lockdown 4 at the time, we were given permission to go ahead with the Holiday School, providing we did not accommodate more than 15 youngsters in any one space at a time. With the new spaces we were able

to take in 90 youngsters each day.

Since then we have worked on furnishing and equipping the new studios and they are now up and running and are accommodating three activities:

A **Carpentry Workshop** for our **Project Hope** youngsters who will be



making stools, tables, cupboards and the like. In the new year they will embark on a new venture with the assistance of volunteer **Reuben Hart** in the making of wooden toys.



A **Craft Workshop** which will focus on the design and production of textiles such as cushion covers and table cloths run by staff member **Clarisa Jonas**.

A relocated **Pottery Studio**, previously housed in a small and dark storeroom under the old building, which will allow our tutor **Jean Bittkau** to take on more students



and boost production.



Work produced in all three studios will be marketed on the Route 62, a popular tourist route which passes through our village.

Our deep thanks go to the **Allan and Gill Gray Philanthropy** advised by **Richard Rosenthal** who provided a substantial grant for the building and to **Brian and Joan Wides** and **David and Philip Brodie** who came to the rescue through our UK partners **EDSA** when costs ran severely over budget.

## Aftercare Programme

Like so much else, the Aftercare Programme had to change and adapt to adhere to all the Covid 19 protocols and restrictions, nevertheless a mixed group of children from the ages of 4 to 11 join us every weekday afternoon from 13h30.



The aim of the Programme has always been to create a fun and caring learning environment and during the pandemic it has become even more evident that the children in our community face many hardships.

Programme Co-ordinator **Sudonia Kouter** describes the Programme as “a very precious and unique bubble where each child, on entering our door, finds a safe space and gets to experience love and care from dedicated staff members which





many of them do not have at home. In this space each child is able to grow and develop at their own individual pace protected from the stresses of the outside world.

“The Programme engages our children in a variety of activities, including Art and Crafts, Drama and Performance, Puppet-making and Performance and Group Games and fun and laughter is always at the centre of it all. Youngsters also get a chance to spend time in the computer lab. where they can explore the



interactive Eduplay software which teaches languages and mathematics.

“When they are done with being creative and having fun, a nice hot meal always makes everyone smile before they depart for home. We value our wonderful space here at our Centre and it is a place children eagerly return to every day.”



Youth Worker **Selanvor Platjies** has responsibility for a group of 20 boys between 6 years and 14 years old all of whom have trouble fitting in with the regular Aftercare Programme. He meets them in the Media Room in the afternoons and says he’s developed “a special love for each and every one of them, from the naughtiest who can’t sit still to the one who can’t stop talking and bothers everyone else during the session.” His goal in everything is to give the boys a chance to develop in a fun way and he gets them to get to know one another by sitting next to a new person every day.



“We laugh together, but they also know when to listen. Sometimes on a Friday I take them to the river and then we have a small picnic and they have the time of their lives. I'm afraid of frogs so I don't always go into the water, but they're not scared. My secret is that I can't swim, but they can. Fridays are always the best day of the week. We see frogs, birds, crabs even lizards and so much more in the wild.

“Then there's also the bike program that everyone loves. For me, it's for their fitness as well as learning about the road signs and safety on the street. I have to keep an eye on them all the time because some of them think we’re out to race.

“I’ve developed a lot of self-discipline in working with children. But when I'm having fun with my group, I play just like them. I get dirty with them. When we see a snake, we run away together. That's the love and bond between us. We are comfortable with each other and we are developing together. My job as youth developer is great fun and I enjoy it a lot.”

## Girls Only

The Girls Only group meets every second Friday afternoon. Initially the group comprised 10 young girls between the ages of 10 and 13 but soon their younger siblings were joining in as well. The



- Programme engages with important topics such as personal safety, self-care, self-awareness and the journey into womanhood.

The group spent a fun-filled day at the **Kannaland Resort** outside our village where they explored the local flora, played group games and enjoyed a nice lunch.

Another highlight was a cake baking session led by our Net vir Pret chef, **Fabian Krause**. Everyone was able to take home a delicious cake to enjoy with their families.



## Chess

The Chess Club has been on the rise in 2021, in spite of all the lockdown difficulties. They have participated in three tournaments since April with great success, winning the **Overberg Junior Championship Trophy**.

**Rhoda-Leigh Claassen** (14) secured the Number One place in all age groups (U9-U19). **Cassandra Petersen** was named Number One Under 11 Overberg District player and **Stanwill Jambo** secured second place in the Under 15 category. These three top players will now go ahead to compete in the Provincial trials.



The Champions with their Trophy and coach Peter-John Takelo

## Eco Warriors

Volunteer **Reuben Hart** reports "2021 as for most, was a challenging year for the Eco Warriors. With the restrictions on gatherings, we missed quite a few clean-ups, but soldiered on. Our biggest and most successful endeavour was the tree planting project. In June the township





housing project, consisting of 87 new RDP houses came to fruition. The Eco Warriors embarked on planting a tree at each of the newly built dwellings. With generous donations from the Barrydale community, a tree was planted at most of the homes.

“Our regular clean-ups commenced as soon as restrictions were lifted and our fight to rid the village of plastic waste took off with gusto, welcoming a host of new little Warriors. Our aim for the coming year is to keep the river clean and educate the youth on environmental awareness.”



## Young Leaders Programme

Living in a small village where resources and spaces are as scarce as they are in Barrydale can be very challenging for young people. To counter this Net vir Pret runs a Young Leaders Programme which gathers every second Friday evening and co-ordinator **Sudonia Kouter** says “It is always a joy to be in the midst of the vibrant energy the young people bring with them. Twenty-five have joined the group this year and, in our fast-paced world where technology is both a blessing and a distraction, they opted to engage in a more meaningful manner through group games, discussions and bonding activities which help members really connect with one other.

“Our Holiday Schools can be attended by as many as 150 youngsters and the support of our Young Leaders is crucial in their successful delivery. It is during these gathering that the Leaders are primed to lead and guide the younger children in the daily activities. They are also playing an active part in preparations for this year’s **Giant Puppet Show**.

“The young people enjoy the socializing effect our gathering has and it is always a blessing to have refreshments to offer to them. We are happy to have a group of young people opting to play an active part of in our organisation, where they all started as young children themselves.”

## INTERNS

Four new Interns joined us in March (**Anchen Jansen, Cerjoh Carolus, Jeremy Hartnick and Lee-Anne Kees**) with **Sylvinia Jambo** staying on for a second year. They’ve been working alongside staff in all our programmes and indeed with the large number of youngsters attending daily, we would be hard pressed to cope without them.



The increase in cases of gender-based violence reported in many places during the lockdown has also affected our small village. In the past year a 14-year old girl who had attended our Aftercare Programme and an elderly woman taking an afternoon walk in the countryside were both brutally murdered, the perpetrators apprehended and jailed.

The Interns are tasked every year with improvising a play on a theme of social concern and this year's group decided to make the issue of gender-based violence their theme. Helped by volunteer actress and director **Denel Honeyball**, they constructed a play, ***Too Good To Be True***, which they performed before a huge audience on Youth Day at an event organised by the **Barrydale Youth Desk**. The play showed how the abuse of women and children is often linked to alcohol abuse and how abusers are often relatives or close family friends.

The Interns are conducting the computer training mentioned above and they are also deeply involved in rehearsals for this year's show.

## SHAWCO

As reported previously, the **University of Cape Town's** student organisation **SHAWCO** has located a **Dell Technologies ComputerAid** converted container at our site. This state of the art facility houses 10 solar-powered computers and an overhead projector and represents a substantial boost to our ability to offer computer access to our community.

SHAWCO's IT Co-ordinator **Marco Charles** came up for a week to train staff and Interns on delivering **Digital Citizen Plus**, a specially developed introduction to the computer which caters for candidates who have very little experience of computers and the Internet. It helps to remove the fear of using a computer for beginners by using a simple, non-threatening approach to learning the basic skills of using a computer, email and the Internet.

This is proving to be of great benefit for us in the training our youngsters and we have now launched a new programme for the wider community. This programme offers a week-long course at the end of which participants get a certificate. 40 candidates have signed up for it. The first batch of 10 can be seen at work alongside.



## December Giant Puppet Show

Directed by **Sudonia Kouter** with help from **Denel Honeyball**, preparations for this year's show are already well advanced.

Early on we chose our **Plant World** as the focus for our Thursday research meetings and conservationist **Flora Cameron** came in for many months to help us understand the three layers of our pant ecology – fynbos, succulents and renosterbos and how they interact. We were proud to hear that we are home to one of only 6 **Floral Kingdoms** on the planet but alarmed to hear how fragile it is.

We decided to make this the focus for this year's **Giant Puppet Parade** and youngsters were brought on board in the **Winter Holiday School** when they were taken into the veld and taught how to identify what they could see and they then created plants of their own from recycled material which they used to decorate our fence.



In the meantime staff and Interns spent many mornings brainstorming a story which resulted in a character based on the Swedish activist **Greta Thunberg** who discovers a plot by a rep from Big Pharma and a local politician to dig up our precious fynbos and process it into a lucrative cream which can lighten skin and straighten hair. And once all the fynbos has been cleared, developers can come in and build a Casino where all the local farmworkers can gamble away their earnings on a Friday night. The show deals with corporate greed, public corruption and gender-based violence. **Sudonia** has scripted the story,



casting has already been done and rehearsals are in full swing.

Our **Herman Witbooi** helped by **Daylon Pienaar** has been tasked with designing and constructing two giant puppets. The first is **Candice**, the Young Activist and the second a **300-year old Gwarrie Tree** which can talk. As usual, our children will be carrying smaller puppets and **Clarisa Jonas** and our **Interns** and **Young Leaders** led our youngsters in making these in the recent holiday school.

Our plan at present to film and then stream the show but we'll look at other options for some kind of public performance in December.

**Angelo Endley** is Director of Puppetry. Music tutor **Charl Koch**, our Director **Peter Takelo** and **Selanvor Platjies** are working on the sound and musical accompaniment. Filming will be done by **Nataniël Pokwas** and **Charl van Zyl**.

## Other News

- Our **Film Studio** was commissioned by the **Barrydale Hospice** to shoot a video promoting their work.
- We are collaborating with **Soundabout**, a UK charity set up by **Ann Harries-Brown** who co-founded Net vir Pret with our Director **Peter Takelo** and which works to enhance the lives and education of people with learning disabilities.



A still from the Hospice video



Working together by Zoom, we are putting together a **Heart-Beat Song** which Soundabout hopes to launch on British television for Christmas and next year the plan is a joint venture based on the **River Song** we composed for our 2019 Giant Puppet Show.

- **ACVV** social worker **Anneline Zilch** and **Sudonia Kouter** are running a 7-session **Parenting Course** for young mothers. The course deals with a wide variety of topics from Health and Vaccination to Nutrition and Anger Management. There are presently seven participants and we are pleased to report that we have had enquiries from other mothers eager to join follow-up sessions.

- Our senior **Riel Dance** group was invited by the **University of Cape Town Drama Department** to travel through to demonstrate and teach the Cape Town students the elements of the dance.



- We have been invited to contribute a video on our work to the **South to South Dignity of the People Festival** which is being run from **Argentina** and will have participants from across **Latin America** and the **Caribbean**.

## In Memoriam Shane Petzer

It is with great sadness that we have to report the sudden and shocking death of our Chairperson, **Shane Petzer** on Thursday 7 October.

Shane had been with us in the early evening, taking compost and seeds to people living in our informal settlement and he was happily chatting to everyone and encouraging them to take part in the **Barrydale in Bloom Festival** which he was organising. He suffered a heart attack at his home some hours later which took his life.

Shane chaired our Board since 2014 and helped to keep us on a steady course. He was a constant inspiration, always bringing new ideas and getting us to see things in a new light and he was always on hand to advise and steer us through difficulties. We shall miss him greatly.



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