

# NET VIR PRET

## PROGRESS REPORT - APRIL 2022

### NEW COLLABORATIONS



Towards the end of 2021 we were invited to contribute a video of our work to the **South-to-South Dignity of the People Festival** which was run from Argentina with participants from across **Latin America, the Caribbean** and around the world.

We decided to let our puppets speak for us and they can be viewed at this link. Please go to **Browse Youtube** and forward to **1:16;26**

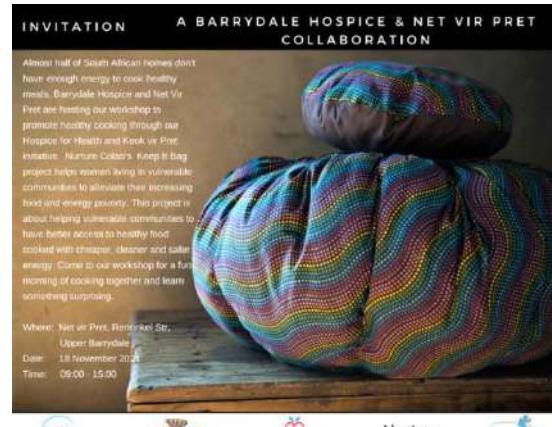
<https://youtu.be/tiMI8ek5g2Q>

In another new collaboration, we worked with the **Barrydale Hospice** to run a day's workshop for local mothers which focused on how to prepare healthy, cheap meals.



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The event was kindly hosted by the **Karoo Daisy Restaurant** and 15 women attended.



In November we partnered with the UK charity **Soundabout** (set up by **Ann Harries-Brown** who co-founded **Net vir Pret** with our Director **Peter Takelo**) which works to enhance the lives and education of people with learning disabilities.

Working together on **Zoom**, we created a **Heart-Beat Song** which Soundabout launched on British television for Christmas as an awareness and fundraising initiative.

## What a Wonderful World!

As readers of these pages will know, we have for many years on the December **Day of Reconciliation** presented an open air **Giant Puppet Show** before a crowded audience featuring up to 150 young participants and show-casing their talents in acting, puppetry, music, dance, set and costume design. This annual event was the outcome of a 7-year partnership with the **Handspring Puppet Company** in collaboration with the **Centre for Humanities Research at UWC**. The Handspring partnership ended in 2017 and the collaboration with CHR continued until 2020. The challenge in 2021 was to create a new show on our own.

We knew that Covid restrictions would not permit a live performance before a crowded audience and we accordingly decided that instead of a stage performance, the show would take the form of a feature movie which we would stream.

In past years we have explored themes of ancestry and heritage (**The First People, The Cape Slaves**) and also conservation (**Elephant** and **Rhino Poaching**, the **Endangered Redfin Fish**, the **Insect World**).

We are home to one of only six **Floral Kingdoms** on earth, as fragile as it is precious and we decided to focus on our plant life.

With the help of conservationist **Flora Cameron**, we researched the three elements of our local plant world, fynbos, succulents and renosterbos, and brought our youngsters on board during the **July Winter School** when, with Flora guiding us, we took them out into the wild and taught them to recognise and identify what they saw.



As all this unfolded, shocking reports were coming in daily from the **Zondo Commission into State Capture**. We began thinking about the potential of young people to take up the fight against corruption and effect change and decided to base our main character on the young Swedish activist **Greta Thunberg**, much in the news at the time.

The development and scripting of the story was a group effort with 11 staff and 5 interns spending mornings together over many months brain-storming. In the end we had a story, involving corporate greed, public corruption and domestic violence, about a plan to exploit our fynbos which our youngsters were able to thwart.

Staff member **Sudonia Kouter** took over as **Director**, mentored by **Denel Honeyball** who kindly came in to help. Our **Herman Witbooi** and **Clarisa Jonas** were tasked with designing and constructing both the giant puppets (**Candice** – the Greta Thunberg character, a 300-year old talking **Gwarrie Tree**, a huge flying **Owl**, and a masked



**Porcupine** and **Rabbit**) as well as the hand-help smaller puppets the youngsters made to carry in the show. Our director **Peter Takelo** and our music tutor **Charl Koch** and his students provided songs and background music while our **Selanvor Platjies** worked on the sound effects.



Our 5 interns were all assigned acting roles in the film and delivered strong and inspired performances. Our film crew, led by **Nataniël Platjies** and mentored by **Charl van Zyl**, had no option but to learn on the job in a steep learning curve involving the technical and creative processes both of filming and editing. On the day of the premiere, we mounted a Parade of the puppets and other characters accompanied by dancers and drummers through the streets of our village.

**What a Wonderful World!** was created in all aspects by our own staff members, with the participation of our Interns, Young Leaders, Riel Dancers and the youngsters attending our Centre.



The film was warmly received both here and abroad and has been described as "powerful and moving" and "touching on important contemporary issues" and can be viewed at this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ToypZBivlk&authuser=0>



To make the movie available to people in our community who do not have access to the internet, we held a number of public screenings which were greatly enjoyed by all.

## PARENTING COURSE

ACVV social worker **Anneline Zilch** and **Sudonia Kouter** ran a seven-session **Parenting Course** for young mothers.

The course dealt with a wide variety of topics from Health and Vaccination to Nutrition and Anger Management. The seven participants all received a diploma on completion and we plan to run further sessions in 2022.



## NEW SKILLS TRAINING WORKSHOPS

Our new building has provided us with the space to expand our activities into morning skills-training classes for members of our surrounding community.



These include a **Carpentry Workshop** which will focus on the production of high-quality wooden toys and a **Textile Workshop** designing and producing cushion covers and table cloths. The **Pottery Studio** will continue producing their much-admired work and we will also continue to offer a course in **Basic Computer Skills**, while our **Chef**

will invite those interested to learn how to bake bread,



## OTHER NEWS

- Support from **Richard and Heather Glasstone** helped us turn a small room at the rear of our new building into a **Uni-Sex Hair Salon**.
- Funding from the **Legatt Trust** enabled us to install **2 Hot-Water Showers** for those of our youngsters who do not have running water at home.
- The **Quaker Service Fund** contributed towards the purchase of equipment for our **Project Hope Programme** which aims at providing skills training for youngsters who have dropped out of school and come into conflict with the law.
- Volunteer **Elizabeth Beer** is running weekly **Yoga** sessions with our youngsters where they are learning to practise the classic asanas and mindfulness.
- For the second year running **Sally Hayes** assisted by a Net vir Pret team delivered **Christmas Hampers** to needy families with support from **Dutch and local sponsors**. This year saw a very welcome increase on the number of families reached, from **50 to 85**.
- Both our Director, **Peter Takelo**, and our Administrator, **Derek Joubert**, were awarded **Gold Medals** by the **Council and the Senate of the University of the Western Cape** at a virtual graduation ceremony in December 2021 in recognition of their "**extraordinary contribution to the upliftment of the community through exceptional leadership and community involvement**".



- On **New Year's Day** bikers from the **Ride With A Purpose** group came up from Cape Town to support youngsters soon to return to start the new school year with uniforms and stationery. 40 of our grateful youngsters benefited.



The group returned in February, this time accompanied by **Ladies of Love** bringing a truck load of donated food.



With the help of the **Country Pumpkin Restaurant**, the group also organised a raffle which raised over R7,000 for materials for our workshops.

- The **Chess Club** competed in the **Overberg Championships** in early March coming away with no fewer than **6 medals and 2 trophies**. The team is due to compete in **Provincial Trials** in May in **Mossel Bay** (Under 15's) and **Cape Town** (Under 19's).

Costs of transport and accommodation are R1,000 each for the seven players. The **Department of Culture and Sport** have now rescinded their commitment to provide funding, citing "mismanagement of funds" in some areas – but not ours and we are calling for support to meet these costs.



- On **World Book Day** in March visiting **EDSA trustee Linda Richards** gathered students from our village and **Weltevreden Farm School** to participate in a **Zoom** meeting with **Bramham School in Yorkshire** (UK) when youngsters were able to read to one another. We prepared a short video to introduce ourselves which can be seen at this link:

<https://youtu.be/bA6POZzjEDQ>



- In March our young puppeteers entertained the crowds attending the **Swellendam Agricultural Show**, parading through the streets to the delight of all.
- In March six members of staff from the **Seven Passes Initiative** based in **George** came on a 2-day visit. We were able to show them our different programmes in operation and we also ran a workshop with them on puppet building and manipulation. Our plan is to return the visit later in the year so we can learn from their work.



The connection with Seven Passes was initiated by the **Institute of Security Studies**. In another collaboration with them, we are being assisted with the construction of a **Theory of Change** document which will add to the value of our work and help us to find greater focus.

- In April we travelled to the village of **Prince Albert** to be present at the launch of the **Community Art Centres Network (CACNET)**, an important new initiative set up by the **Stand Foundation** with the support of the national **Department of Sport, Arts and Culture** and the provincial **Department of Culture and Sport**. CACNET aims to facilitate collaboration between organisations working in the field and to be helpful in the task of fundraising.



**The new CACNET board**

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