



MASIPHUMELELE LIBRARY

“IN TOUCH” and listening...

to the Community
and to YOU!

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We recently had the Honour... of a visit to our Library from Prof Jonathan Jansen of the University of Free State (UOFS/VS). He later wrote an article published in Cape Times in which he commented that “the library in the heart of the township is a hive of learning - of everything from mathematics to drama - for some of the smartest kids I've met”. Take note: that’s a University Professor speaking! His article focused primarily on the issue of ‘social cohesion’

Professor Jansen observed how politicians often address ‘social cohesion’ at conferences (“little other than opportunities for political grandstanding”), wax lyrical with historical references, or engage in “South Africa's favourite non-racial pastime, self-declared victimhood”. He then considers the many unhelpful statements and actions from our political and corporate leaders that can be so damaging, concluding: “In other words, it would advance social cohesion if the politicians stayed out of the way”.



However... he goes on to give examples of social cohesion he has witnessed in communities throughout the country, where racial barriers have dissolved as ordinary people go out of their way to help, support and integrate with those from different ethnic backgrounds:

“It happened with a farmer who gave away some of his land and cattle, and provided training to emerging black farmers to ensure they maintained productive farms for themselves and their families”.

“It happened when a white woman accepted the threat of estrangement and disinheritance from her conservative family and went right ahead and married her black lover”.

“These are not fictitious examples. These are events I've witnessed among ordinary South Africans”.

But... perhaps the most inspiring are Professor Jansen’s observations from his visit to Masi:

“On any given school holiday, in the middle of Masiphumelele, you are likely to find a group of older white youth helping talented black pupils to prepare them for matric examinations and the beginning of university.”

“The bond between these deeply committed white youth and their younger black counterparts is something to behold.”

“The other day I popped in at the Masi library. I found my current students working alongside their white mentors from previous years.”

“What amazes me about the youth of Masiphumelele is how these new recruits lived through the first semester of university.”

“All of them boast a bag of distinctions in difficult subjects. They are without the racial bitterness so easily observed in angry students. They are optimistic about their futures and live, learn and love so easily among those with lighter skins.”

“In that library in ‘Masi’ they learned not only to do well in their academics but to relate well to their white brothers and sisters who loved them and taught them”.

At Masi library... we have become accustomed to working together as a socially coherent unit with mutual respect, understanding and gratitude. But what we have established here is something special. Now others are noticing too.

“Please come and meet my mother,” said one of them. “She would be so proud.”

IN FOCUS this month..... Masicorp

For over a decade... there has been a 'force for good' in the community of Masiphumelele. What began in 2002 as a gesture of kindness and philanthropy from an American based couple has grown into a multi faceted organisation which has supported the building of several community resources (our Library included!), has helped numerous individuals, businesses and programmes in the community and offers bursaries and mentoring to support gifted young people through college and University. Now funded and facilitated both locally and from around the globe, Masicorp is hard at work in the community providing a 'hand up' rather than a 'hand out'.



A Creche from the 'Seedlings' project

Some History... In 1999 Carol and John Thompson began working in Masiphumelele to provide housing (23 homes were built!) and community and pre-school day-care centres. In 2002/3 they went on to build the first stage of our library which they handed to the City of Cape Town for day to day running, but have continued to support to this day. With the success of these ventures, 'Masiphumelele Corporation' was established as a charitable organisation, educational programmes were developed and a variety of support was offered to people and businesses in Masi. In 2005 the library was extended with their funding to provide more study space and to house the computer facility which doubled up as a presentation space and lecture room. A team of volunteers was recruited from the community, receiving a monthly stipend from Masiphumelele Corporation, and the library was able to extend its outreach programs. In the following years Masiphumelele Corporation continued to support the library and initiatives elsewhere in the community.

Under New Management... The aim of its founders was to manage the organization for 10 years and then to hand it over as a self sufficient entity to continue its valuable work in the community of Masi. The handover was achieved in 2010 when a new CEO was appointed (Andrew Smith) and, with re-branding as 'Masicorp' and the appointment of an executive board, the organisation has continued to evolve and expand. As a Library Partner, Masicorp contributed towards the funding for the latest library "Outreach centre" (we were particularly grateful for the furnishings and audiovisual equipment) and whilst continuing to explore new ways to help in the community, the main focus of their work is now towards education. They have been instrumental in the 'formalisation' of four pre-school crèches, are currently at work to upgrade five more in Masi (the Seedlings Project) and have established close links with both Ukhanyo primary school and Masiphumelele High school



Bursary Students with Volunteers

Bursary Program... Perhaps the way Masicorp has helped most to change lives is via bursaries to fund students through tertiary education. This programme is now in its eighth year and has so far seen eight of its students graduate from university and college, some with top class degrees and now in full employment. At this moment in 2012 eighteen students are studying at university, funded by the sponsors of Masicorp. What a wonderful ongoing programme and legacy for Masicorp's founders, volunteers and supporters from around the globe.

Here at the library we are forever grateful for the generosity and help from this outstanding charitable organisation and we are proud to have Masicorp as a Library Partner.

*"I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters
to create many ripples" – Mother Teresa*

IN THE PICTURE... Christine has been camera in hand once more, this time at the Homework Club which runs each weekday at the library to help move children forward in their education. Judging by the levels of concentration and the number of smiling faces, we appear to have a winning formula!



A final word from Sue

July was a busy month with the Careers Indaba in full swing. World Teach volunteers and learners from 2011 came in to help, paying back some of the assistance they have themselves received over the years. The Indaba included tutoring, workshops and outings. Pick 'n Pay were very generous in providing lunches for the group every day and we are so grateful to Julian Hobson and his team.

The City of Cape Town is running a Library reading competition this year so Masiphumelele and Ocean View libraries joined in the District finals at Grassy Park Library on 19 July. Finalists were present from Grassy Park, Masiphumelele, Ocean View, Retreat, Lotus River, Pelican Park, Ottery, Hangberg, Southfield and Lansdowne. We are pleased to say that Thabisa Sithetho from Ukhanyo Primary School in Masiphumelele received a "Most promising reader award" and Amanda Voyi will go through to the Xhosa finals.

Other highlights were the giant size Mandela puppet, made by the Masiphumelele youth development programme. It was brought to celebrate Nelson Mandela's birthday in July. Some of the youngsters work for the Handspring Puppet Company.

We were also very fortunate to have 'Les Doigts de L'Homme', a band from France, to perform at the library. After the concert they gave a demonstration of how to play guitar and the learners were given a try too! Later, IkamvaYouth learners took them for a walk around Masi before the band returned to Cape Town to fly off to Australia for their next concert performance.



Thabisa Sithetho the Masi-phumelele 'most promising reader'



Lusanda Mbhibhi gets a hands on demo from Benoit Convert while Yannick Alcocer and Tanguy Blum look on.



Guess who paid us a visit!

The second Library Partner Liaison Group (LPLG) meeting was held on 7 August 2012.

We started the morning with a 'partner presentation', where in pairs we discussed the programmes we run or co-ordinate and our individual involvement. Our partner in the pair then presented to the rest of the group, providing a "third party's" understanding of everyone's involvement.

We then continued discussing the library park and agreed that it is time to consider other options such as artificial lawn or another surface altogether. We will call the relevant suppliers and discuss with MasiCorp and the City of Cape Town.

We discussed encouraging more Ukhanyo children to join certain library programmes e.g. Girls group and Homework club. I have spoken to Jan O'Connor at Ukhanyo and she will encourage children to join.

We also discussed the need for committed volunteers. Ideally new volunteers need to commit to a minimum of 3 months before they begin volunteering in order to gain experience and be productive in our programmes.

Career Guidance is also an area of concern. We were unanimous in agreeing that a career guidance corner within the library would be a great asset. Ideally someone could staff the corner 3 times a week and appointments could be made for guidance, taking into account job searches and both academic and vocational career choices. We will ask Milli to look out for a volunteer. A trained paid member from the community would be the best option in the long term.

We are sad to say good-bye to IkamvaYouth intern, Siobhan Hayes who has been a great asset to the IkamvaYouth programme. She has shown a maturity way beyond her years alongside the bounce and enthusiasm of a young adult.

The Ladies club have really enjoyed having her around – she ended off her stay with a Ladies club sleepover at her house mother, Nadia's home which was enjoyed by all – home made pizza, nail painting, chick flicks and horror movies plus snacks all night long!



Vidie - A welcome new staff member

We will miss you Siobhan and you will always be welcome back at Masi Library.

Vidie has also settled well into her new job. She is learning fast and we are all delighted to have her on board.

To close: "a tortoise tale".



Siobhan also joined the Girls group – here she is with the group on her last day before returning to Canada.

On leaving work last Saturday two youths approached me with a tortoise in a bucket which they had found on the beach. Parting with a few rand I ended my working day walking the confused tortoise to his new home on Trappies Kop in Clovelly. I hope he/ she is happy with the new environment. A librarian's job has a variety of challenges to be tackled, even 'after hours' with a tortoise!

Until next time,

Sue

"A library outranks any other one thing a community can do to benefit its people. It is a never failing spring in the desert."

- [Andrew Carnegie](#) -

If you have any comments about our newsletter or news about your programme (come on folks... there simply MUST be something you can tell us!) or if you have something to be addressed at the next Library Partner Liaison Group, please email us at intouchmasi@live.co.uk
Thank you.