



# NEWSLETTER APRIL 2009



## END OF THE FIRST QUARTER THOUGHTS ..... WHERE DID THIS ALL BEGIN?

In 2004 Sean and I decided to rescue a flailing computer project at Byletts High School. We had 16 broken laptops, 4 working, a dilapidated outbuilding and a lot of enthusiasm. That was the birth of *Volunteer Africa 32 south*. By the end of 2008 we are proud to be managing almost 150 computers in four labs, reaching over 1000 rural learners with computer literacy, involved with three further primary schools, three crèches, two conservation projects, a horse rehabilitation and trails farm and as of this week the "Township to Village" (T2V) project with the Chintsa East community.

VA32's recent partnering with *International Student Volunteers* (ISV) has allowed this joint venture project (T2V) between VA32, SANCO (the community representative committee) and the Friends of Chintsa to be launched. In a nutshell, the project is an Urban Renewal & Greening of the Township initiative that has a long term vision of genuine Upliftment with each group coming in to achieve a set of clearly defined objectives in the village. In agreement with SANCO the township entrance, taxi rank and creation of an elaborate child friendly area is to be prioritised. A special thank you to Marijke Laan and Sonja de Froe for their very generous donations that have gone to subsidising the child friendly component of the project.

Another special thank you must go out to the staff of VA32 for their non stop efforts to ensure that we continue to deliver the highest quality projects and further grow the influence we have in the area for the betterment of all.

To all our past and present volunteers, well done on creating this stable platform from which we currently work. We are always aware that it is quite difficult for you to see the value of your contributions while you are here. Being a volunteer is like being a link in a long chain, and unless every link along the way is as solid as the one before, the system will fail. For those of us lucky enough to facilitate the growth of these projects and reflect over time as to your value and successes, it is humbling to say the least. Thank you from all of us on the Wild Coast who are witness to these long term benefits to the region.

As this newsletter is our primary means of keeping all of you updated, it does tend to get rather long. Unfortunately there is no other way to say what needs to be covered in an abbreviated fashion, so make a cup of coffee, sit back and enjoy the read.

With thanks,

Mike

## FROM THE SCHOOLS .....

*Hi everyone! I'm Jo, one of the VA32 Schools co-ordinators working here in Chintsa.* Mike has given me the task of writing the newsletter...again (so that he can spend more time kite-surfing).

2009 started with a bang with the arrival of 11 school volunteers during the months of January and February. With two full houses of people all brimming with enthusiasm, we started the school term in full force. With Wetlands as the topic, volunteers equipped the learners with further skills in using Word, PowerPoint and Excel as well as carrying out some practical activities. The learners, being as eager as ever, embraced the new topic and produced some outstanding work. A BIG thank you to all the volunteers who contributed to the teaching of Wetlands, you all did a fantastic job!

January also saw the start of a new teaching initiative in all three of our computer labs – the teaching of Grades R-2. Being a pilot project, it was approached with some hesitation and a lot of room for growth. However, with the hard work of the volunteers, as well as the Grade R teachers who assisted in lessons, the initiative was successful. We have decided to continue with their teaching but this term ensuring that the Grade 1 + 2 teachers are with us assisting with the translation into Xhosa. The work these small learners have produced using PAINT is outstanding!

Staying within education, art is still going strong in all three schools but has changed in the structure it is being carried out. All foundation phase learners in all three schools are split into two groups and taught weekly: one group being taught computer literacy and the other doing an art activity within one lesson (and then vice versa).

Finally, the last of educational news is that this term learners will continue to develop their computer skills with Grades 4 – 7 learning through the topic of Climate Change. The topic has been planned using a range of different resources and will include a district competition that hopefully all three schools will enter – the prize being R5000! Keep your fingers crossed!



## WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING AT THE SCHOOLS?

For those of you that live in the UK, you may just see some of our teachers in your country during the month of July this year. Bulugha, Cintsa and Ngxingxolo schools have partnered up with three schools in the UK as part of the British Council DFID Global Partnership programme. The partnership involves pen-pal links, joint partnership activities and reciprocal visits. The schools have currently applied for £6000 for one teacher from each SA school to visit the UK in July and vice versa for the British schools early next year. We should hear if we have been successful any day now!!!! It will be a wonderful experience for both learners and teachers!

We were extremely lucky in February to have been given 300kg of Maize meal that we distributed to Chintsa, Bulugha and Ngxingxolo schools as well as Ngxingxolo crèche and Enkewsana school. Thank you to Lou Billet who passed on this donation from the Maize producers to us.

VA32 were lucky to have Amy Ringholz volunteer. Amy is a professional artist and was with us for two weeks in February. As well as sharing her amazing artistic skills with the schools, she very kindly purchased a tremendous amount of art equipment and resources for Ngxingxolo, Chintsa and Bulugha schools. Thank you Amy – your generosity has enabled all the learners to participate in quality art activities.

Bulugha and Cintsa School have been participating in the JAG Mighty Metres programme since the start of the year. The programme entails the learners running about 1km a day, hopefully resulting in a marathon being run over a few terms. The learners have been receiving incentives such as t-shirts and water bottles as they reach certain goals. The schools are doing really well and even the Grade R's are running. Well done learners - keep on running!!

Chintsa East Public School and Ngxingxolo Primary school both entered into the Choral Eisteddford competition on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> May. All choirs sounded beautiful but obviously our choirs out sang the rest with Ngxingxolo receiving 1<sup>st</sup> place and Chintsa East receiving 2<sup>nd</sup> place in



## FROM OLD TO NEW...

### - BYLETTS HIGH SCHOOL -

For those of you that had the opportunity to work at Byletts School. You will be pleased to know that they have finally moved to a fantastic new purpose built residential High School. The new build included, by design, a computer lab as you would expect to find in any first class school.

As for computer classes, VA32 has formed a relationship with the English department of the school to enable more learners to access the computers.

Mike Ford has been working with the English department of the school to deliver English lessons through computer literacy to Grades 10. The project has been going well so far and we are hoping to extend it to include Grades 11 + 12.

### - CHINTSA EAST PUBLIC SCHOOL -

Chintsa East Public school were donated a fantastic swing set for the Grade R learners from Chintsa residents Werner and Martelize Nel. Thank you to Werner and Martelize as well as Milton, Rainer and Rachel who spent the day repainting and making it safe for the learners to swing to their heart's content! The Grade R class in Chintsa has had a total face-lift this year with volunteer Mandy Turner single handily renovating and turning Nokaphumla's class into an absolute delight. With a fresh lick of paint and new carpets, rugs and furniture, all purchased by Mandy, the Grade R's now have an amazing learning environment to start their first steps to education. Thank you Mandy for your incredible dedication and hard work to this project – you have made some little learners (plus their brilliant teacher) incredibly happy people!

Also a BIG thank you to Blue Bell Hill Primary who sent us an amazing collection of books that has revamped the Grade R reading corner and the school library. The books are fantastic and as you can see from the photograph the learners are loving their new books. Thank you to past volunteer Ruth Selvey who linked us with Blue Bell Hill.

Chintsa East School football and netball teams will be looking very fancy in a couple of weeks with the arrival of brand new kits, thanks to company 180 Communications. The company have very kindly found sponsors to fund a fantastic new kit for the school's sports people.



- **CONNECTIVITY** - VA32 have been trying very hard this term in getting Chintsa School connected to the internet so that both learners and community can enjoy the benefits of connecting to the world. We are in the process of getting the pay phone line converted into a landline and then the school will be able to access internet through ADSL. Thank you to those who have made donations towards Chintsa's connectivity – if anyone else is interested, please contact VA32.

A BIG project that we are working on with Chintsa school this term is the setting up of an official feeding scheme. The aim is to provide a hot meal to each learner every day, based on a balanced diet. It will be supported through donations and we have been lucky to have over 15 people who are committed to donating £5 each month for a minimum of 2 years. If you would like to be part of this initiative, please contact VA32 for details.

- **BULUGHA FARM SCHOOL** - Bulugha is lucky to have Nuremburg volunteer Rainer Buzello placed at their schools for a six month period. Rainer, who has been at the school since the start of March has fitted into the school brilliantly and is a great addition to the school as well as VA32. Thank you Rainer!

- **NGXINGXOLO PRIMARY SCHOOL** - For previous volunteers that have worked in Ngxingxolo School, you will be pleased to know that there are no more green boxes!! The school finally decided to hire a locksmith to fix the huge safe the school already had and now the computers no longer have to travel from Chintsa to Ngxingxolo every day. Much better for our volunteers' backs and much safer for the computers.

Ngxingxolo Crèche was also given an 'educational revamp' in February by volunteer Emma Pawson. Emma's super skills with learners with special educational needs transformed Maureen's classroom and made it more accessible for all. Thank you Emma!

Still on the topic of the crèche, volunteers dedicated a few Wednesday afternoons to helping Maureen and her crew in getting the garden ready for productivity. We had great fun in the garden and hopefully all the lovely vegetables we planted will grow into nutritious food for the little learners.

## OTHER NEWS...

As most of you know, **Nomakwezi** gave birth to a gorgeous baby girl in February. Even though little Alizwa came into the world a month early, both her and her Mama are doing brilliantly. Congratulations Noma! Nosindisile is covering Nomakwezi until she returns to work at the end of May.

### *The return of Emma....*

Past School volunteer Emma Goodwill returned to us in April to complete two months at our **African Angels project**. Emma, who worked at Bulugha Farm Schools last year for three months is only our second volunteers at Angels. If you are interested in volunteering at this very worthwhile project, please see website for details or contact [mike@ahj.co.za](mailto:mike@ahj.co.za)

## ADULT COMPUTER CLASS

Computer classes for the adults is flying and so far we have trained over 40 adults on our level 1 course and 12 are currently studying our level 2 course. We already have over 20 people waiting to do the next level 1 course and we don't even advertise – just word of mouth! We are working on sourcing funding for a community computer centre so that even more adults can access our courses and connect with the internet. If you are interested in this project, please see [www.wikemy.org](http://www.wikemy.org) or [www.givengain.com](http://www.givengain.com) for more information and advice on making a donation.



School text by Jo Ford - VA ICT Facilitator

COMPUTERS.....SPORT.....ART.....OPPORTUNITIES



# CONSERVATION PROJECTS AND WORKING HOLIDAYS IN THE BUSH

## - WILDERNESS CONSERVATION PROJECT -

### THE GREAT KEI KUBUSI WILDERNESS PROJECT

VA32 is really excited to see the Great Kei Kubusi Wilderness Project finally move into a state of readiness for green volunteering. The project is under the leadership of Dennis Taylor, Zoologist and conservationist (Diploma in Agricultural Management and a BSc, Botany & Zoology; FGASA (Field Guiding) Level 3 SKS (DA) (Special Knowledge and skills with dangerous animals), with 15 years conservation management experience.

The project has a dedicated volunteer and research rustic bush camp at the base of the Kubusi cliffs. Dennis is hands on in all aspects of the conservation drive for the broader river canyons of the Great Kei and Kubusi systems.

This wilderness project lends itself to gap volunteers looking for a truly remote environment where an intense focus of the project is to redress imbalances in nature, research fauna and flora and be part of a large initiative of reintroduction of indigenous mammals. There will be a raptor rehabilitation centre which will compliment the avian studies on the breeding colony of Cape Griffin Vultures and raptor population.

Students and interns will work along side Dennis to compliment their botany and zoology studies.

For all you past volunteers, this project comes highly recommended by us at VA32. So if the economy is getting you down, come spend some time in the heart of pure African bush.



WORKING TO PUT BACK MORE THAN WE CONSUME

## - WILD LIFE CONSERVATION PROJECT & WORKING HOLIDAY -

### INKWENKWEZI WILD LIFE PROJECT

*Text by Karen Wannenburg*

Let's start by welcoming some new guides – JP, who has been spending a lot of time with the Vollies, as well as Jamie, an ex-pat who has been living in the UK and has come home to lend his skills to the project.

We've had some lovely groups doing Conservation, and things are progressing nicely on the Reserve. The old lion cub enclosure was torn down due to the cubs pulling a daily great escape, and a new, escape-proof enclosure is being erected.

The current cubs are getting very big now, and at 6 months old are quite a handful. They are still just as loveable however, and so enjoy being cuddled and played with by anybody willing to go in with them. Some sort of protective clothing is definitely recommended!

The kitchen / communal tent has had a revamp, and is looking lovely. The bridge outside the tent is also completed, and is a great way to get across into the bush. All the canoes are being housed next to the bridge now, and are being used a lot by the vollies.

Secure bins had to be brought in from reception for the trash, as the monkeys have decided that the communal tent is definitely their one-stop-shop for breakfast in the mornings! Cereal was moved into proper dispensers, but that didn't stop our simian friends – they figured out very quickly how to get to their Rice Crispies! We are currently trying to figure out the best way to stop our little shoplifters – the mess they leave is quite spectacular!

Something new was tried with the horses, with volunteers walking them from reception to their camp so that they could ride them at leisure. It started being a bit of a mission getting them back to reception quickly when guests wanted to ride, so it turned out to be just a great bit of exercise for all the girls!

Rodger and Johan have started doing survival skills with the group, which has been a huge hit, especially combined with air rifle shooting and bush sleepovers.





Big Burger Night is still a firm favourite, and Thursdays have become Chintsa Night – generally eating at Michaela’s and partying at Sea Breeze before being taken back to camp. Friday night is still big party night at Buccs – with lots of chilling and beauty treatments on Saturdays. Mike still loves to take any willing participants on the Adrenaline Boat Ride at the East London Harbour, and this has become another fun favourite to do when there is some spare time one afternoon.

Joe, pictured left, with a group of volunteers, is recovering well after his motor bike accident. It’s good to see him back at work.



Overlooking the Great Kei River Canyon



The Inkwenkwezi Elephant sanctuary serves as a wonderful teaching & learning facility for the area. VA32 will be taking local school children through the reserve over the remainder of the year as part of their environmental education.

We are also looking at the possibility of taking some of the older primary learners on an overnight hike in the Kei Kubusi area.





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## - CHINTSA HORSES & REHAB FARM - THE ULTIMATE WORKING HOLIDAY FOR HORSE LOVERS

Text by Georgie Dickerson

The first part of the year has past and how far have we got??? Shall we start by saying in Easter this year we have been running for 11 years, quite an achievement with lots of hard work.

Before I forget, Natalie Goodier from the UK and Tersia Needham from Cape Town were both with us as a volunteers in 2008, they came back and visited just before Xmas to celebrate Tanja's 30th birthday, they were here for a short while, but both made themselves useful with the every day chores and riding on our beautiful beaches in payment.

We have managed to keep in touch with a lot of our previous volunteers and I'd like to thank Heike Darnley for her information she passes on to us, Heike is a veterinarian student who helps us with info from her lecturers at the university, thanks Heike and good luck with the studies.

Our first three volunteers for 2009 were Steph, Sabine and Simone all three German girls who were defiantly workaholics and really kept us on our toes. Never mind the daily routine of feeding and watering, they cut out weeds in the paddocks and even picked up horse manure, very experienced girls in "paddock management" Steph was definitely the driving force!!.

Sabine was the equestrian amongst the girls, Steph and Simone had less confidence and experience, by the time they left Simone was prepared to go home and look for a horse to buy, she left with loads of confidence and felt her experience here warranted getting more involved in her home country.

Simone was with us for two months and before she left even planted a vegetable garden with my granddaughter Asha, "thanks for the veggies Simone and Freddy is missing you".

Our volunteers here at the moment are two Australian sisters Angela and Serena very interesting girls who rode with their Mum Dyane from the top of Aussie to the bottom, it took them 18 months, their Dad was their back up with horse feed and provisions. They did this a few years ago during their break between primary and high school, they are what you call pretty 'spunky'.

We also have our first guy volunteer from the UK who had no experience of horses before joining us, though Robbies Mum is a great horse lover and has sponsored us in a few of our projects, she is a regular visitor to South Africa on business and has become a good friend. Her latest involvement with us is supplying Sugarbeet seed, we are trying to grow the beet for the horses, it has great fattening agents and being a Rehab Centre we always have the aged and the skinny's to contend with, especially with winter creeping in.

Lucy Carrol is also from the UK, she was supposed to leave us last week, but has extended her stay until the 5th of June, Lucy is a real scream and her extended stay is a real pleasure.



### **Our projects for 2009**

Achieved so far is the connection of the water to our paddocks at Chintsa West, for all my previous volunteers you will know how much hard work and running around it saves us, we still have to hump 25 liter drums of water around, but it is so much easier and less labour intensive. I never thought I'd say it, but thanks to the developers at Chintsa West. A special thanks must go to Kate and Simon Bossaza from Panorama Farm who have supported us and given paddocks for our horses for so many years.



Our second project for the year was to build stalls at Chintsa, this is a much more expensive venture. So far we have the cement to put the poles securely into the ground and throw a slab, this was sponsored by a local guy, 30 bags should be enough, this is thanks to Johnny and Cindy Human from Glengarriff and old friends of the family.

Roof sheeting has been sponsored by a friend Shaun Krull and his family it may not be new, but all in good condition, with a coat of paint who will know the difference?



To finish off the stalls we are looking for 3.6 metre poles, not sure of the quantity probably in the region of + - 50, Simon Bossaza is busy with plans and what I need material wise is rafters and brandering for the roof. For the slab we will need stone and sand, these are the main ingredients. The last and most important is the labour, I've suggested to Mike that a work party for volunteers sounds good and maybe I can get the owner of the land Simon Bossaza to oversee as he is doing the plans.

To all my previous volunteers, thanks a lot and I really think we have made good headway this year.