

Annual Report - St Francis Outreach Trust - 2013

In 2013 "Homes to Grow" went international. Friends from seven different countries came to visit our home. Six happy children welcomed them and eagerly got them involved in fun and games. Those who had met our children before, were amazed at how their personalities had changed and their physical condition had improved.

Our "fighter", who bravely underwent surgery in February, was up and about with her siblings and back in the creche after 2 months in a wheelchair. Today she walks with only a very slight limp. In January 2014 it was her turn to receive her personal gift from the children of St Peter's Arlington as an initiation to entering school, just as her brother did 2 years ago. She had big tears of joy in her eyes, when Monika wrapped her in her own quilt. Our 5 year old, who as a toddler did not learn to pronounce her words clearly, due to an undiagnosed ear condition, has 100% hearing after she was treated and is now continuing to progress well with the speech therapist.

The three older children are fortunate to have 4 kind ladies sharing the weekly responsibilities of educational sessions. Two of the children did not attend crèche and Grade R regularly and have already benefitted tremendously from these sessions.

We are grateful to our partners at Home from Home who continue with very relevant workshops for our foster mother. Occasionally they organize, with the help of donors, a fun-day for the foster mothers. The trustees meet with Joyce regularly to discuss ongoing issues and to prevent or solve problems.

Germa and Con from the Netherlands came in July. They have formed a trust and already contributed several times financially. In June members of this Trust came to get to know our children. They don't just visit, they get involved, play with the kids, cook for the family and take them on outings. On their birthday Germa sends each child best wishes with his/her photo. They know the names, ages and sizes of our children. Frequent communication keeps them up-to-date.

Mary and Richard Nodar, one of our first overseas supporters who persuaded their Church, St Paul's in Cleveland, Ohio, to assist us, came to visit for a few weeks last year and spent time at the home. Mary always cooks a few nice dinners for Joyce.

We have admirable supporters locally too who have assisted us from the first day of the trust's existence and still do, financially, and with their time and expertise. For instance, CMR offered their emergency services to Joyce and the children in 2013. This eliminates a great concern of ours, of not being able to reach the children fast enough in case of an accident. We appreciate all our supporters who sold calendars for us in 2013 to raise funds for the second home. (The latest news in 2014 is that through the hard work of Uwe and Michelle, we have finally secured a plot for our second home. Legalities will still take a little time, but we are hopeful that by May 2014, if nothing dramatic intervenes, we can start building.)

The aim of foster care is that wherever possible, the children should return to their family. This is a long and difficult, and for the foster mother often painful, process. Social Service guides the development very closely step by step and evaluates along the way, to ascertain if the child and the receiving parent are ready, rehabilitated and prepared for the child to come home. One of our girls has visited her family several times already, and so far everything seems to be going well. Contact with the family is encouraged, even if no reunification is possible.

Thanks to Michelle's methodical preparations and training of the foster mother over the last 4 years, things are running smoothly at the home. Joyce seems to be happy in the position of foster mother. She has accumulated a lot of knowledge relevant to child care and managing a home, thereby also benefitting herself and her own family.

The SFOT is grateful to all the volunteering hands and feet and minds who were involved with our children's care and the financing of our home and who gave of their time and enthusiasm during 2013. You encourage us and give us wings to do more and better.

Monika du Sautoy
Chair
St Francis Outreach Trust