



HOMES TO GROW
Established in 2009

St Francis Outreach Trust

A brighter future for abandoned children

Annual Report 2021 of the St Francis Outreach Trust

2021 – This was another year filled with many challenges! We were constantly kept on our toes managing the ongoing changes due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was especially hard for our foster mothers to contain our energetic youngsters and keep them happy during lockdown. The SFOT team admirably handled the day-to-day changes of switching back and forth between on-line learning, remote learning and back to school. Fortunately the children proved to be resilient and stayed positive. We are grateful to our supporters for their concern and assistance and their continued encouragement, which helped us through the difficult times.



a visit in 2023.

We missed the regular visits from our friends and supporters. Con and Germa, from the Netherlands hope to be able to travel in 2022. Members of the amazing Love Quilt team, under the guidance of Gretchen and Bill are planning

Change of team members: In March we had a change of drivers. Sphelo left us in order to further his studies to become a pastor. Andile, our new driver took responsibility for transporting our children, as well as helping with maintenance work in both houses. Being a father himself, he brings family values in understanding our children.

Our mothers had to manage for a while without an assistant. With the help of HFH we were able to employ a part time assistant in August. Xoliswa has adjusted well, and has already substituted for our fulltime mothers during their annual leave, as well as competently handling some challenges. The children like her, and she makes an effort to gain their trust and affection, such as taking them to the beach during a scorchingly hot weekend.



Education: Due to the different stages of lockdowns our children were taught by zoom over some periods and also had extended holidays due to Covid. Their ability to use computers has come along in leaps and bounds and they are very helpful when on occasion I need assistance! Our teachers went the extra mile to keep the children up-to-date with their schoolwork by on-line. One of our girls requested a transfer to a skills school in order to learn hairdressing and cooking. Our GM applied to the Batavia Skills School on her behalf and happily she was accepted for 2022.

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All our children passed to their next grade and returned to their extra-curricular activities in the second term. To improve their mathematical abilities, 2 of our kids received weekly lessons at the private Chit-Chat Math group, and our remedial teacher spends extra time with both of them. One of our girls was awarded with her first Silver Merit Badge for Grade 5 in November for credits of service and schoolwork improvement and our 2nd oldest boy received a medal for best improvement for a student in the entire school.

The children were all enrolled for 2022 schools. This process needs to be applied for every year anew. One of our boys will be starting High School in 2023 and an application has to be sent to 3 different schools. The decision where the child will be taught is made by the Department of Education preferably closest to the location of the child's home.

A generous donation from Steenberg Golf Club enabled us to repair and spray paint our school van. Graham Ross from the 'Southern Peninsula Panelbeaters' charged us a fabulously reasonable fee, which allowed us to have the work done!

Aging – out:

Three of our older children are fast approaching their 18th year and the 'aging-out' stage. We are in discussions on continuing to guide them, until they self sufficient and can be independent. This needs careful planning and financial consideration. The foster grant will be re-assigned after the 18th year, should the young adult choose to continue with tertiary education. Both girls are planning to attend 4 years of college after finishing the skill school. They would attain the equivalent of a high school diploma. In the meantime, we want them to gain experience in related skills and give them the opportunity of shadowing "real businesses" and maybe work part time there. Our boy has chosen woodwork as his future occupation and will also – though a year later - continue in an appropriate college.

Medical: Our greatest 2021 challenge occurred when our GM, Michelle tested positive for Covid on the 4th April and spent the 11. - 24. of April in the hospital on oxygen treatment. Her recovery was slow and she has lingering long- term symptoms, but in spite of this, she was back working – much too early - at the beginning of May. One of our teachers began assisting her part time with the office work.

At the same time Mother Emily was on sick leave for 2 months and spent most of that time in the Masonwabe house, in the circle of her children and with her daughter taking on duty as a foster mother's assistant.

Monika was not well and spent a few days in the hospital at the end of April, followed by a couple of weeks of recovery.

Two of our girls had problems with their hearing aids and one required surgery, which was skilfully accomplished by the surgeons at Groote Schuur Hospital. Another of our girls had to be admitted to the hospital suffering from severe headaches, which did not go away. She required medical attention in the hospital by a Neurologist and returned home after a few days. All staff members have received the vaccination against Covid – 19. One of our teachers tested positive but managed to recover in 2 weeks.

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By adhering to strict precautions, our mothers and children have kept healthy. They do not let any person enter the houses without a mask and diligently check temperatures. Our children did not leave the homes unnecessarily and the restrictions at the schools were very strict. All things considered, they worked together closely managing logistics and schooling by supporting each other. A great team!

Extra- curricular activities: Our 'golf girl' has made stunning progress in her game with Peter Daly as her mentor. She



seriously considers Golf her future profession. She has the support from the 'Swing' team through her school and has already successfully taken part in competitions.

Our second oldest boy joined the '2nd Fishhoek Scouts' in July and he attends Friday evening meetings or hikes. He enjoys the 'know how' courses and looks very smart in his uniform and beret.

Our youngest girl transferred to a new school building in a different district for 5th Grade.

She continued with her dance lessons and took part in a concert towards the end of the year. 'Soccer girl' concluded her sessions at 'Moyo'. The activities implemented by Zack over the last years, challenged her courage and built her strength and confidence. We are very grateful to Zack! She requested becoming a member of a soccer club. She will join the Fishhoek club early next year.

Our oldest boy has become an enthusiastic cyclist. He joined a cycle club and attends their outings every weekend when he is home from the boarding school.



Staff Training: Our mothers were very privileged to attend regular workshops given by Home from Home in regard to children's i.e. aging- out, grief support or psychological situations. Our GM trained the staff in logistics so that the planned schedules worked smoothly and in preparations for compliance with the Dep. of Social Service audit in early 2022. The children received regular monthly awareness behaviour workshops by Monika. On-going computer training was provided by HFH for the moms so that they can efficiently operate desk-top computers provided by HFH for HFH team meetings and emails.

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End of the year activities: Over the Christmas holidays 4 of our children joined their biological families for a few weeks. 3 of our kids are orphans and the remaining 2 have a father, who shows little interest in them. For foster children the ultimate goal is the reunification with family – as much as it is possible. Connecting and visitation between parents and children is encouraged.

The pre-Christmas time was filled with exciting events. There were the school Award Ceremonies and Christmas parties, a leadership course, the dance concert and the visit to the Shark Centre. The children were taken on beach outings, and to the rockpools where they were taught about marine creatures and plants of the sea.

There were happy faces decorating the Christmas tree and waiting in anticipation to open the parcels under the tree, sent by HFH. We are very grateful to HFH for the support of their Social Workers who assist us with workshops for our mothers and thoughtfulness for our children on their birthdays. We are grateful to have their valuable advice and assistance regarding social concerns for our children.

Next year we hope their SWs will find 3 children for us in need of foster care, to fill our homes to capacity.

It is very clear that only with very committed and compassionate persons a project like ours is possible!

We thank all of you, who over the years have supported us through your sincere concern for our children. Also thanks to our team of mothers, teachers and trustees who have worked with us and taught our children! Thanks to you we were able to send them to good schools and assist them in achieving academic and personal growth.

Monika du Sautoy.

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