

Volume 1 • February 2008 • Hillcrest, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Focus on iThemba is an accredited non-profit, public-benefit (18a) educational organisation, offering cluster foster care, life skills for families and education.



FOCUSING ON A NEW YEAR WITH BRIGHT OPPORTUNITIES.

The beginning of a new year gives rise to the opportunity to take a fresh outlook and to refocus. For our children at iThemba, 2008 brings a new school year but with a difference (see page 3). It is wonderful to observe the blossoming lives of the children and to realise that each day brings growing confidence and that the foundation of these future leaders is solidifying.

*Max-Joshua and Peter
enjoying the bond of brotherhood.
Photo by: David Reese*

*From top: Lindo, Christopher,
Promise and Peaceful captured
during the December holidays.*



Message from the Chairman



It is incredibly fulfilling to see the progress of the iThemba organisation, in terms of what was achieved in 2007 and already the great steps that have been taken this year. The goals of the original vision are being met daily and for us this brings great joy. Every person who is touched by the spirit of hope within iThemba feels the positive power of what we have achieved and what is still to come.

An especially exciting development for 2008 is the opening of the iThemba Academy on the campus. Education is crucial in securing the future of our young leaders and through the Academy we can already see the overwhelming progress and positive feedback from our children.

The vision for the Academy is a strong one. I believe in ten years time it will be a school of excellence, offering world class education not only to our children but to those from the

Embo and Hillcrest community. The school will be a sought after educational establishment with an enrollment of up to 400 learners.

Some independent schools are struggling with transformation and the ability to attract different cultural groups from within South African society. We are extremely well placed to bridge that gap by attracting first world parents to become stakeholders and enroll their children at the school.

The feedback from the pupils has been excellent. They feel it is the first time that they have been heard and their self-esteem is being boosted. We are meeting some of their deepest needs through the Academy and thereby carrying the message of hope forward.

Plans are still on track to build three more cluster foster care homes on the campus by 2009. This is an utmost priority. The model we have developed is yielding excellent results and the staff and I are moved to touch more young lives in the same way.

The continued support of our donors is most valued and I hope that you are reminded daily of the great impact you are making in our children's lives through your support. Each smile and every confident step is a direct result of your generosity and commitment.

We are in the process of updating our website and I encourage you to visit it regularly to keep informed of current news (www.focusonithemba.org).

I look forward to hearing from you should you have any queries or comments,

Sincerely,

Danie van den Heever

iThemba children update



During the December school holidays Brian, Peter, David and Chris attended a four day holiday workshop at St Mary's Diocesan School in Kloof. They thoroughly enjoyed the activities they engaged in during this time.

Two of the children were able to gain some valuable work experience. Musa worked as a waitron at a restaurant in the Hillcrest area. While he found the work demanding he enjoyed the experience and learned some valuable skills. Lindo assisted at a local hairdressing salon where she was able to see first hand what a career in this field might offer her in the future.

Towards the end of the holidays the children attended a Scripture Union Camp at Glenhaven in the Drakensberg. They enjoyed this experience, learning new skills, making new friends and coming closer to the grandeur of nature in the Drakensberg.

In addition to these organised work experiences and events, parents also arranged outings with their children to the museum and the beach.

A NEW SCHOOL IS BORN

“The aspirations for the iThemba Academy this year are to develop the learners into confident children with high self esteem,” said Natalie Cunniffe, Principal of the newly established school.

An excellent education from early years is crucial for shaping a child’s future. It can be very challenging to endure a trying childhood with a fragmented education and then to slot into mainstream schooling.

The children at iThemba have varying educational backgrounds each with individualised needs. It became apparent that there were inconsistencies in achievement across the range of academic subjects, for example some excelling in English but behind in Mathematics. This led to frustration and dips in confidence. A need was highlighted for a private Christian independent school to be established on the iThemba campus to cater for these unique needs, hence the birth of the iThemba Academy.

A derelict building on the campus was renovated for the first roots of the new school. Initially there will be three classrooms with future plans to renovate other nearby buildings for additional facilities.

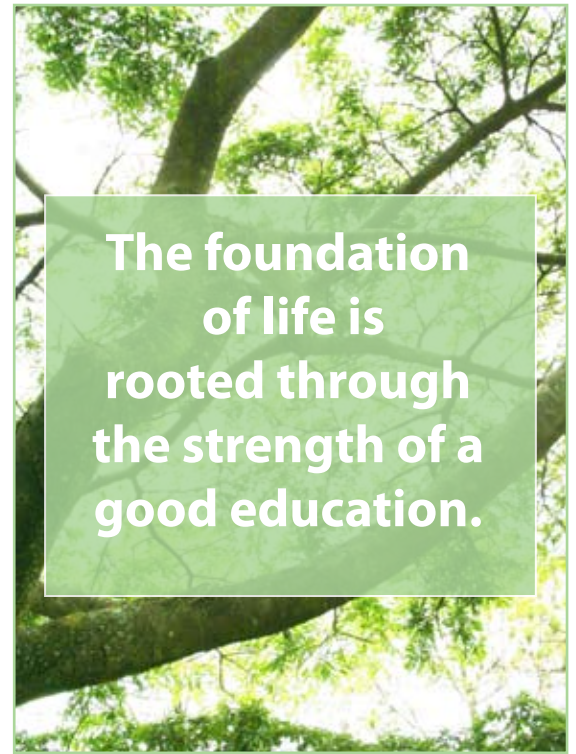
There was great excitement amongst the children and staff when the new school uniforms arrived and the reality of the new Academy became clear. The first lessons commenced on 21 January with pencils being sharpened and shoes polished.

The school follows the ACE curriculum, an individualised educational programme, within an environment designed to encourage achievement. Classes will be offered from Grade R (kindergarten) to Grade 12; presently Brenda, Brian, Lindo, Musa, Sanele, David, Peter and Nandi are enrolled in various Grades. The valued services of both a social worker and a psychologist are available for learners, parents and educators.

“During the course of the year we will focus on development of character and spiritual growth,” said Natalie. “We will also aim for holistic education which includes arts and physical education.”

She explained that the continuous development of teaching staff was key and that carefully selected educators with the qualifications and experience necessary to meet the highest of standards were being recruited. Reaching the goal of opening the doors of the school to the local Embo and Hillcrest community towards the second half of the year was also paramount.

An intensive fundraising drive is being implemented to raise capital to expand the school’s facilities. **Should you wish to donate towards this worthwhile endeavour please contact Natalie on +27 31 716 3347 or email: natalie.cunniffe@focusonthemba.org**



The foundation of life is rooted through the strength of a good education.



Natalie Cunniffe, Principal of the iThemba Academy, pictured with pupils Nandi (right) and Lindo.

The goals of the iThemba Academy are:

- To establish and maintain an independent school of excellence on the campus
- To develop in our learners the ability to set personal goals and take responsibility for their achievement
- To develop learners into future leaders
- To provide supportive programmes for the parents
- To provide psychological and social support for the learners
- To ensure that iThemba Academy is sustainable in the long term



Q & A with Brenda

Brenda, 16, is a girl with a difference - she is incredibly talented and loves music, writing poetry (read one of her poems below), acting and fashion. She is a valued member of Joseph House and has formed wonderful bonds with her parents and her siblings. We asked her a few questions after school to find out what she was thinking...



What are your goals for 2008?

To do more music - I want to sing and learn instruments. I really enjoying doing gospel singing lessons at the moment.

What is your favourite place on the campus?

The school, I feel so much more comfortable at class and I am learning so much.

What are your three favourite foods?

Pizza, steak and vegetables!

What do you do to relax?

Sleep.

What type of acting do you want to do?

I want to act on TV one day or in the movies.

Who is your role model?

Incha - an eleven year old girl who can play the violin.

What inspires your poetry?

Anger or sadness, then I want to write.

What are your thoughts on the new school?

I love it. I can't wait until tomorrow so I can wake up and go to school again.

In memory of you Mum

By: Brenda

We cannot communicate
with those, those
who have passed, passed away
to the other, other side
nevertheless their presence remains
as long as they are in our hearts.

Mom, I feel, feel
a warmth, warmth around me
like your presence is so near
and I close my eyes to visualise
your face when you were here
I endure the times, times
we spent together, together
and they locked inside my heart
For as long as I have those memories
We will never be apart
Even though we cannot speak no more
my voice is always there, there Mom
Because every night before I sleep

I have you in my prayer
I pray for you more than
I pray, pray for myself
God be, be with you
you, only you Mother.

Our contributors and donor friends, both locally and abroad, are most valued and crucial to the longevity and sustainability of the organisation. Should you feel moved to donate please notify us of any deposits made so that we can issue a tax certificate and acknowledge your generosity.

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*Thank you for harnessing the power of hope and making a significant difference
in the lives of South Africa's future leaders.*

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