Kidz Care Trust
From the street, back onto your feet

SPECIAL EDITION

18 July 2018

News@KidzCareTrust

Newsletter for Kidz Care Trust

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NELSON MANDELA

Remembering a true champion for children and their rights

Celebrating the 100th birthday of late President Nelson Mandela on 18 July 2018 also reminds us of his special relationship with children and in particular children living and working on the streets.

Kidz Care Trust wishes to celebrate this leader for championing the rights of children. In 1995 children from Bloemfontein (Kidz Care Trust) who attended their drop-in program in Bastion Street were invited to attend Madiba's first birthday party after he became President. Kidz Care Trust Program Manager, Marita van Kraayenburg, talked to Michael van Heerden, their street worker at the beginning of the program in 1991, about this invitation, the event and some of the happenings, which are shared below.

The children were very excited about the invitation to Madiba's birthday party which was held in 1995. The invitation was extended to organisations working with children living and working on the streets across the country at the request of the late President. The children were all dressed-up and ready to go early in the morning – not quite knowing what to expect. A bus picked them up at the Bastion Street drop-in centre and transported the children to Bloemspruit Airforce Base where they boarded a plane! A first for all of them. Nervous giggles and bravery described the mood well on that morning. Off they went…

The reception in Gauteng was a happy moment. There were lots of food upon arrival and the children dug in with all the other kids who had arrived. Food to fill those hungry teenage stomachs and the nervous holes after a first-time flight.

Just after arrival Michael realised that some of the children were not really interested in attending the birthday party. They used the opportunity with good entrepreneurial analysis and ability to hitch a ride to Gauteng – where their families lived. A birthday party plus a free ride (flight) equals a family reunification for two boys. Indirectly Madiba's gift to these two boys. We followed-up afterwards whether the children were fine and in fact reunited with their families and the feedback was positive. The social worker contacted a children's organisation in Johannesburg to continue rendering services to the boys.

Ice-cream in abundance! Our children were excited and immediately informed Michael that they are going to take some home. Michael couldn't help but be amused, yet not surprised. He had to explain to the boys that the ice-cream will not last the journey back home, thus not a good idea. Our boys were disappointed but understood.

Madiba's birthday party was a fun filled event with children living and working on the streets from all over the country. Games were played. Food and snacks were served throughout the day, while the children enjoyed live entertainment by several celebrities like Yvonne Chakachaka. Very few children had the opportunity to shake Madiba's hands, though all saw him and were beaming with excitement.

After the official birthday party, the children were entertained with an educational and adventurous afternoon at the zoo. Lions. Zebras. Snakes. Hippos. And many more animals were seen, talked about and warned about before the journey back to Bloemfontein. Tiredness after a day filled with activity lessened the anxiety about flying back.

All children received track suits as a gift. White track suits donated by a big retail company. Yes, you read that right and it is OK to smile. We still chuckle about this some years later. It does not take a genius to figure out that less than two days later there were no more white track suits. The boys did, however, wash their tracksuits regularly at the drop-in centre in Bastion Street with the assistance of Elizabeth (who worked for the organisation at that time).

This was Madiba's first birthday party for children and our kids were there in 1995! Alas, all of them are adults today, but we still remember that Madiba thought it a generous action and a symbolic gesture to focus on one of the most marginalised and neglected groups of children in South Africa. At Kidz Care Trust we remained inspired by his commitment and translate that daily into our work ethos…**from the street back onto their feet**.

During the same year late President Mandela announced that he will give one third of his salary to work towards the betterment of the lives of children, which provided the impetus for the establishment of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund.

Madiba, we salute you as a leader, and most likely the only President that ever put children at the centre of his or her own birthday celebrations.

The children who sleep in the streets, reduced to begging to make a living, are a testimony to an unfinished job.
Nelson Mandela, 1996

History will judge us by the difference we make in the everyday lives of children.
Nelson Mandela, 2002

Each of us as citizens, has a role to play in creating a better world for our children.
Nelson Mandela, 2002

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1993 when Nelson Mandela received the Nobel Peace Prize he gave part of the prize money to help street children.

Help us to Make a Difference

Donations help us to get them back on their feet.

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ABSA Bank – Loch Logan
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