

WINTER

A WINTER'S TALE: WHEN THE REAL COLD IS DEEPER THAN THE SKIN

Winter in Bloemfontein is harsh. Every inhabitant of this city knows that our winters have no mercy! Most of us are fortunate to have sufficient layers of warm clothing, a warm place to stay and sleep, blankets, heaters, and other items to shield us from the cold. School children face the winter mornings bravely while getting to school where they enter classrooms that provide some comfort to manage the weather.

There is also another reality unfolding in this merciless Free State winter. Children living and working on the streets experience a different reality without the basic warm clothing, sheltered places to sleep, warm food, and the comforts too many take for granted when the temperature drops very low. They need to survive with what they have and what they know in their living space – *the streets*.

Considering the reasons why they are not living with their families, the street is, in most cases, a better alternative - despite the cold. A household where alcohol abuse, physical abuse and family violence are part of the routine of living, combined with



other forms of abuse and ongoing trauma become factors that push them into the streets. At **Kidz Care Trust** we know that

these factors compound the core reasons why the children left home in the first place and that the same reasons make returning home difficult.

TRUST IS DEVELOPED IN SMALL DOSES

I know after many years of doing street outreach with children living and working on the streets in Bloemfontein that my role is to change distrust into real trust. This happens in small steps. I know that every child on the streets has a first instinct is to survive! It is nearly always a given when I meet a child for the first time, he or she will not give me his real name. And that is OK, as our focus is on each individual child when we meet him or her and not necessarily on their name and surname. And I know the day that a child shares his real name and surname with me, and maybe where he comes from, the trust between us is growing. It may be something small for the outside world – but for us, it is often profound progress. But we are still at the beginning of this child's journey back onto his feet.

Shaun (social auxiliary worker responsible for the street work outreach)

Parents and extended family members are aware that the children are living and working on the streets. Most of them are already known to social welfare providers and receiving services. And we also know that by the time that we engage with the children on the streets, **Kidz Care Trust** is often the last resort. We do not judge, and we do not give up easily (if ever). We understand that there are factors that push them to the streets combined with factors that pull them to the streets – even in the freezing winter temperatures these factors are stronger than the elements of Mother Nature.

While we often profess that our society is rooted in the spirit of *Ubuntu* that facilitates collective care and support, particularly to the vulnerable, these children do not experience this often romanticised notion of it. Their experiences manifest in a different

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version of *Ubuntu*, reliance on each other to live, survive and meet their basic needs while on the streets. The safety net that our social welfare system proclaims to be with social services, grants, support, health care and the right to basic education has failed them – often a few times.



Our street work knows no season

Children living and working on the streets survive through their

“own safety net” of finding food, begging for small change, finding a warm place to sleep and looking out for each other. They have learned the hard way not to rely on the safety nets promised in policies, laws, budget votes and other speeches. And this is what makes our work at **Kidz Care Trust** both difficult and rewarding. We need to help them to regain trust in us and what we offer, which takes long and is hard work. We know from experience and based on proven evidence worldwide that we need to proceed with care, respect and most of all with small steps at the pace of each child to rebuild trust and find their way from the streets back onto their feet.

The first step is **street work** where we reach out to every child living and working on the

streets. It is our way of getting to know them and allowing them to get to know us. This requires us to be consistently on the streets – meeting them where they are. Some engage immediately; others proceed with extreme caution. We do not judge, as we know, if you have been disappointed by the safety net that is there to catch you when you fall and protect you, it is difficult to re-engage and trust again. We know presence on the streets is



Street work - the first step towards changing mistrust into trust

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SMALL TALK TO GET TO THE BIG ISSUES

Talking to the children about the reasons why they are on the streets is not only about asking a question and getting an answer. It often results in either no response or a very vague answer. We understand. Revealing the real answer means for each child to go to deeply buried and painful psychological places and face the hurt that caused them to leave home in exchange for a life on the streets all over again. We proceed with the utmost caution and in a very professional manner. And this requires patience, expertise and experience. We know that there will be a moment when each child realises that we need to know their story not because we are curious, but because it is part of their journey towards healing.

We often hear that it is better on the street than at home because the streets provide an income! That is the “easy” answer, but certainly not the real reason. Each child has his or her own story that unfolds, one page at a time. Unfortunately, each child’s story has the same recurring themes that include abusive parents or caregivers; teachers calling them slow or dirty; sexual abuse and threats of being harmed or even killed if they disclose; alcohol abuse; alternative care placements that could not cope with their behaviour, amongst others. It is never one single factor that makes them go to the streets, but a combination of factors that make them choose the street as a better alternative.

We cannot erase unhappy memories and bad experiences. However, we know that we can support each child to work through their trauma, learn new skills, start to make better choices, and reclaim what is left of their childhood.

Neo (social worker at Kidz Care Trust)

the most significant and valuable action for the children.

This winter reminded us again that we need a **drop-in centre** in town. It is an integral

part of our proven service delivery model – a place where children can come for a warm meal, an informal programme, health checks, and engagements with our staff. It is simply another building block in building trust, providing services and working towards getting from the streets back onto their feet. We had been struggling to find a suitable (and affordable) place for a long time, while employing innovative, albeit sometimes more costly alternatives. Street work and a drop-in centre are two sides of the same coin, and work in tandem as a service to the children.

The value of street work and drop-in centre services is that this carefully designed process of building trust through a non-judgmental, respectful and consistent engagement with the children, often results in us being able to reunite the children living and working on the streets with their families and communities before they

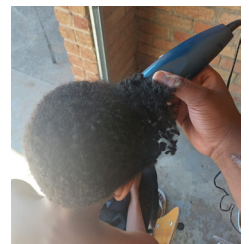


Lunch time at the drop-in centre programme is also connection time

need to be placed in our residential care programme at the child and youth care centre in Roodewal. As we get to know each child while they are on the streets, we are able to connect with their families and/or other service providers who are already providing services to them. This is not only important for referral, but experience has also proven that the earlier we identify and engage a child on the streets, the easier it is to reunite them with their communities – before street life becomes a permanent place for them.

Our work is to listen, engage, plan, often re-plan, and build trust with each child while they are living and working on the streets. There is nothing quick about this process, nor can we set any strict timelines. It takes time, at the pace of the child, for them to start to feel that they can trust adults, that adults will not hurt them, humiliate them, or chase them away. Then we can guide them to make choices that are best for them.

This winter we were again reminded that the children living and working on the streets do not only need physical warmth, but also social, emotional and psychological warmth. And the latter is the road to trust, better choices and getting back onto their feet.



A haircut at the drop-in centre programme. It is not just a haircut, but also a moment to build a relationship - one child at a time



Message from our Manager

The winter months in our city are tough. Every seasoned Bloemfontein can attest to that from their own personal experiences, and it is often difficult to explain to people from elsewhere who are not experiencing the same type of cold. In the same manner it is often difficult to understand what children living and working on the streets go through during our winter months, which makes an already tough time of street life so much more challenging.

During winter we at **Kidz Care Trust** always become acutely aware of the importance of street work and drop-in centre services as an integral part of our programme. These two components of our programme focus on building trust, while also providing essential basic services to the children as part of our larger programme goal – to get them from the street back onto their feet. A few articles in this Newsletter explained this part of the programme, so I am not

Going out on the streets to engage and work with the children who call the street home is the entry point to understanding who each child is, and how we need to approach him or her.



Street work in action - we go where the children are. Our staff are experienced in this, and most children know them as a consistent feature on the city's streets.

going to repeat it, other than it is an essential part of our programme.

Going out on the streets to engage and work with the children who call the street home is the entry point to understanding who each child is, and how we need to approach him or her. And our staff are experienced in this, and most children know them as a consistent feature on the city's streets. Our drop-in centre programme complements the street work component by providing a more structured service providing basic services and support for a few hours

a day – a place where the children can go – a place where we can continue our work, provide a warm meal, do health screening and

gradually introduce them to a “structure” that is different from what they live on the streets.

For a number of years, we had to implement the drop-in centre programme without a physical place that is accessible to the children in the city. This requires us to deploy innovative strategies to make sure that this component of our programme happens, which ranges from transporting children to our child and youth care centre for a few hours to having the trunk of our vehicle doubling up as the

“drop-in centre”. This is not ideal, and we know from experience that a physical place in the city is needed. Notwithstanding ongoing exploration and negotiations with different government structures from the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality and provincial government departments, the establishment of

a physical drop-in centre as we had for many years in Bastion Street and Parkweg Police Station remains out of our reach. And, we simply do not have the money to rent a space to provide the drop-in centre programme from.

The one certainty in this regard is that we will not give up trying to find a physical space for our drop-in centre programme. We know what it means and the important value thereof in our approach and programme with the children!

If anyone can help us with finding such a space, or knows someone who can assist, please do not hesitate to contact me.



Children spent a few hours per day at the drop-in centre - a safe space that compliments the street work component where Kidz Care Trust continue their work to get the children from the street back onto their feet.

Marita van Kraagenburg



Tlaleng joins our team

Tlaleng Makua started on 01 July 2026 as **Kidz Care Trust's** new bookkeeper. At **Kidz Care Trust** we work as a team, which means that each staff member needs to connect his or her

work with our wider purpose that focuses on the children. Tlaleng is already a valuable part of our team and is embracing our staff ethos of holistic service delivery in various areas by assisting us not just with bookkeeping, but also with social media. It is refreshing to have someone from a younger generation who understands social media communication! Join us in welcoming Tlaleng to the **Kidz Care Trust** team.

Children in street situations

"45. Drawing attention to its general comment No. 21 (2017) on children in street situations, the Committee recommends that the State party collect disaggregated data on children in street situations and revise the Strategy and Guidelines for Children Living and Working in the Street, in order to ensure that they have better protection and fulfilment of their rights, in particular education, health care, social services, intervention and prevention programmes and child protection, supported with an adequate budget."

Extract from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child's *Concluding observations on the combined third to sixth periodic reports of South Africa* (March 2024)

Back on their FEET



SIZWE

a story of small yet profound steps

We found him on the streets, a small, thin boy without warm clothes to protect him against the cold. We gave him food and said we would be back the next day. He told us his name was *Oupa* and that he is 14 years old. He lived with his mother and grandmother. He said he saw his father regularly on his way to the liquor store. He was fine, just hungry because nobody worked at home. He could not go back to school because the school sends him home as he does not have a school bag and stationery.

We knew he was not 14 years old and that *Oupa* is not his real name. It took many days and weeks for him to come to stay at our child and youth care centre.

It is now a month later. We are still looking for his parents. He has no clinic card or a birth certificate. Luckily, we traced his last school where he repeated Grade 1 in 2021 and dropped out in September the same year. We believe that it is the same year he left his home and started living on the streets.

Sizwe said he is going to school with his new friends at the centre when the new school term starts. He informed us that we must get him shoes and a school uniform – which we faithfully did.

We informed the school and explained his needs. The first day at school he was full of excitement. He looked like any other 11-year-old going to school. The same day the school phoned to ask if we come and pick him up as he refused to go into the Grade 1 classroom. We pleaded and negotiated with the school. A day later *Sizwe* was back in school. Again, the school phoned to inform us that this time he ran away.

Not the success we wanted. We knew from experience that re-entering the schooling system will be a challenge.

We found him on the highway. He

climbed in the car and asked us to take him home. Home turned out to be our child and youth care centre. He did not run away from us because he feels safe enough with us. For us at **Kidz Care Trust**, that is the real success story.

Change is a process. Learning new skills to handle life takes time. Mobilising a system to make *Sizwe's* right to a basic education a reality is overwhelming, difficult, but not impossible.



Sizwe joining the soccer team. He was part of the Kidz Care Trust soccer team during a match against Engo's children's team.

For now, he learns about brotherhood and becoming a person in his own right. He makes his own bed in the morning; he helps to wash dishes and takes care of our chickens. The rest of the time he plays. Playing is where he learns to communicate his frustrations and feelings without swearing or fighting, to ask before he takes something, to try something new even if he is going to fail, not to give up, to work as a team and learn how to solve problems.

Education has many faces. We are confident that he will pass his first "test" at our child and youth care centre - learning routine and structure – a milestone for future healing and preparation for his new life away from the street.

Want to HELP the children?

We request all prospective or interested donors and volunteers to consider working through the organisation rather than directly with the children. This will ensure that they get specialised support and is more sustainable.



KinderFonds

MAMAS

MAMA'S ALLIANCE: FASD WORKSHOP

The *Kinderfonds MAMAS*, one of our donors, has the MAMAS Alliance in the country, consisting of all the projects they support in the country. The Alliance serves, amongst others, as a network to share and learn from each other. In June 2026, our social worker, Neo Pule, and social auxiliary worker, Shaun Atlee, were the first of our staff to attend the MAMAS Alliance workshop on understanding Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders and the effect they have on a child's development.

Our staff do not always have the opportunity to attend external training, not only because it is costly, but also because of their individual workload. **Kidz Care Trust** is grateful for this opportunity that has allowed our staff to receive valuable and very relevant training. Children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders often present with ADHD-like behavioural patterns such as inattention and easy distractibility, physical hyperactivity and fidgeting, impulsivity and difficulty with self-regulation. As Shaun indicated after the training: *"This training was a big eye-opener for me as most of our boys suffered from this, although not all of them have been diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder"*.



Shaun Atlee & Neo Pule at the MAMAS Alliance workshop on understanding Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

Kidz Care Trust Heroes

From one person and a phone call to a long-term commitment: Oranje Primêre Meisieskool

Mrs Rosa Nortjé was a teacher at Oranje Primêre Meisieskool in Bloemfontein and her journey of helping children living and working on the streets started on a freezing cold Friday in 2008 while on leave. She was concerned about the homeless people and children on the streets in the cold and prayed that churches would open their doors to support them on this cold day. It was not only a prayer, but also a calling to be more active and directly involved in helping them. But where to start? What followed is not only a remarkable story, but testimony that the commitment and care of one person can make a big difference.

Rosa phoned the SAPS at the Park Road Police to find out how and where she could be of service. Constable Maria Rakgosi referred her to Kidz Care Trust where she spoke to the social worker, who told her that their streetworker, Michael van Heerden, meets the children living and working on the streets twice a week in a park across from AAA Meat in Alexandra Avenue, where they are given food and play soccer, while the Kidz Care Trust staff get to know the children.

The social worker at the time told Rosa that so many volunteers get started with stars in their eyes and hope in their hearts, but after a while give up because it is not easy working with the children. It requires time and can be physically and emotionally draining.

Rosa thought to herself: “You don’t

know me, I don’t give up”.

Rosa started working with Micheal and has very fond memories of him telling her: “Ma Rosa, let me show you where our children are”. They drove to one of the regular places where the children are in Aliwal Road and Michael called two of the children, telling them to look after Ma Rosa while he went looking for the other children. Food was distributed to the children from the boot of the Kidz Care Trust vehicle.

Rosa knew she could make a difference, but also knew that she did not have to do this on her own. She discussed her dream of providing food on a regular basis to street-living children with her principal at Oranje Primêre Meisieskool; and the “feeding project” was born.

Rosa initially started the project by requesting that each child bring one extra sandwich to school to be taken to and shared with children living and working on the streets. Not too complicated and easy to manage! But as it goes with a good mix of care and commitment, it has grown beyond Rosa’s, the school’s and our wildest imagination! Today, 18 years later, we receive deliciously prepared meals individually packed, snacks and fruit.

When Kidz Care Trust operated our drop-in centre at the Park Road Police Station, Rosa continued her direct



Shaun Atlee, Chrisne Ehlers, Rosa Nortjé & Marita van Kraayenburg

support and involvement with the children there. Her visit involved Bible study with the boys, and she always started her visit with a prayer. Rosa also supplied much-needed towels, toiletries and even some computers.

When Rosa’s husband became ill, she could not be physically involved at the drop-in centre anymore, but she remains a regular donor to this day.

We are eternally grateful that Rosa listened to her calling because she has had an impact on the lives of countless children! Her tenacity and determined words of “you don’t know me, I don’t give up”, have ensured that a tradition was formed and is still being upheld by Oranje Primêre Meisieskool and Kidz Care Trust. And we honour her commitment every day by telling ourselves that in our work, we never give up.

Thank you Ma Rosa and Oranje Primêre Meisieskool.



What was started by the compassion of Rosa Nortjé 18 years ago, is today an invaluable tradition of support care by Oranje Primêre Meisieskool



A BUS FULL OF EXPERIENCES

One of **Kidz Care Trust's** programmes is to prepare the older children for independent living after they have reached the age of 18 years. This requires the development of independent living skills and assisting them in making decisions for their adult lives. One aspect of this programme is to expose the children to the real world at different businesses and enterprises to broaden their horizons and for them to learn more about different opportunities.

Our partnership with **Interstate Bus Lines** provided the perfect opportunity to arrange for the boys to visit the company on their premises and get some hands-on experience behind the scenes about the bus industry. The children had the opportunity to drive digital buses, observe the work in the workshops, learn more about how buses and a company such as Interstate Bus Lines work. They ended this experience with a tasty lunch!

Their words on the way back best describe the value of this experience:

"We played a game, like Xbox, about how to drive a bus. It felt real and taught me how to drive a bus. It is difficult to drive such a big thing."

"Wow, this place is not just about driving a bus, they have lots of workshops where we can work one day."

"I think I would like to build a bus one day."

Thank you to



for this amazing experience.



It's a date!

26 September 2026 - From Pain to Purpose: Ernest Lepaku, a motivational speaker, youth developer and mentor, heard about our work and reached out to us, asking whether he could come and hold a session on moving from pain to purpose. He will share his own story with a focus on education, knowledge and purpose in life – helping the children to see that learning is more than going to school, but a tool for life. During his visit he will actively engage with the children, share practical guidance and tools and create an open space for them to ask questions and reflect on their own stories. He wants every child to leave the engagement believing that their life experiences can be reshaped to also become their purpose. **Kidz Care Trust** is looking forward to welcoming Ernest on 26 September 2026.

28 September 2026: Learning can be fun, while also serving a purpose to learn more about nature and our own indigenous flora. We, and in particular the children, are already excited about the planned educational visit to the *Botanical Gardens* in Bloemfontein.

**Kidz Care Trust
Annual General Meeting
30 September 2026**

If you are interested to attend the Kidz Care Trust Annual General Meeting on 30 September 2026 (it will be held early evening), please send an email to info@kidzcaretrust.org.za to receive an invitation.



International Nelson Mandela Day 2026

At **Kidz Care Trust** we have always experienced International Nelson Mandela Day on 18 July every year, as more than a day when people engage for a quick “let us do something” event. It is a day that highlights and reminds us that we are working in a community that cares and gets involved because what we do matters to them.

This year, the **Navalsig SAPS** did an awareness-raising and educational engagement on the dangers of drugs and crime with the children, and brought a personal hygiene package for each child.



Towers of Hope, our Homeless Network partner, which donates weekly food parcels to **Kidz Care Trust**, invited us for a prayer day, while they donated additional and much needed food parcels for our kitchen and soft drinks for our children.

The **OFFTrail Hiking Club** invited us to the historic

Oliewenhuis in Bloemfontein for a hike – children and staff. Afterwards they played games with the children, provided a snack pack for each child, and donated clothes.



We were blessed with games and lunch during the **Charis Bible School's** annual visit to the child and youth care centre.

Thank you to everyone who allowed the children to experience the true meaning of *International Nelson Mandela Day*.

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

Nelson Mandela, 28 July 1996

Help us to
Make a Difference
Your donation helps us to get them back on their feet.

Kidz Care Trust
ABSA Bank
Branch Loch Logan: 632005
Cheque Account: 4064878805
Swift Code: ABSAZAJJ

About Kidz Care Trust

Kidz Care Trust is a registered non-profit organisation and is also registered as a public benefit organisation, which serves the community of Bloemfontein. As a voluntary association **Kidz Care Trust** is required to comply with the provisions of its own constitution and is managed by a Governing Board as set out in the constitution. Our aim and responsibility are to help transform the lives of children living and working on the streets in Bloemfontein to a life of value which they envision and deserve. Our programme combines multiple interventions such as street outreach, drop-in centre services, a child your care centre, education and social work services, with the purpose to reunite the children with their families and/or communities. *From the street, back onto their feet.*