

## **THE OUTCRY!**

Alan and Sheena Gaston work with children in Pietermaritzburg, KZN, South Africa.  
Newsletter 19, November/December 2008.

### **Khayelihle – Beautiful Home.**

#### **Place of safety. Sheena writes:**

We are pleased to report that the building work should be finished soon. It has been reasonably painless but we will be glad to get back to normal. As far as timing is concerned, we have decided to wait until the New Year before starting to operate as a place of safety. The fact that the building was delayed and also because we are having visitors in November and December has led us to decide to open in January after the long summer break here. **'D'-Day is 26 January.**

We are very grateful for donations we have received towards equipping the nursery and getting suitable transport. We now have almost all we need in the nursery and we are still saving up to get a vehicle. We are delighted that the pre-school the little ones attend has been very supportive. Mothers have passed on prams, high chairs, clothes, etc. Recently Natalie organized the items we had been given and put them into the nursery. This has given the project a reality and we are excited. It is a great privilege to have the opportunity to give short-term accommodation to needy children.

#### **My Family and Other Animals**

You know that we have recently got our permanent residence. Well, we have now also got our South African identity books. These contain our SA identity numbers and we have to carry them at all times. We are delighted to have surmounted another bureaucratic hurdle.

All the children are well. These months we are in a birthday season. Some of you know that Sheena had a significant birthday at the end of September. Well, Henry turned 11 a week later and had a sleepover in a tent in the garden with 3 of his friends. At the end of October Siphos turned 5. She had a party with some friends of hers. We never realised how much noise 5 year-old girls make. They ran around the garden screaming excitedly, ate cake and fell on the dressing up box with glee. We are really pleased that Siphos took all this in her stride and was as noisy as the rest. She has a little circle of friends in school and continues to blossom.

Sihle will be 4 at the end of November. He gives us many laughs. When asked recently what his favourite vegetable is, he replied firmly "Fishfingers"! As well as fun, he often gives us pause for thought and is still clearly impacted by his abandonment. Last night when I sat down on his bed to read him a story he kissed me and said, "Mummy, never go away."

- **Pray for 26<sup>th</sup> January** and the children who will come to us. Pray for our stamina
- **Pray** for our own children as they adapt to an extending family and for Natalie's family in these new circumstances
- **Pray** for little Sihle that he will become more secure and know that we won't go away
- **Pray** for Sheena's mum and dad as they travel to South Africa on 13<sup>th</sup> Nov., and back to NI on Dec. 9<sup>th</sup>
- **Pray** for wisdom about operating the place of safety and **praise** God for the contentment we feel about this calling. May we really show that our God is the Father of the Fatherless.

***We hope that you have a great Christmas. As we celebrate Christmas and think of the baby who had nowhere to be born until the innkeeper offered short-term accommodation, may we whole-heartedly live for our God who has a special heart for the rejected and the abandoned.***

**Swings and Roundabouts. Alan writes:**

It's been an exciting couple of months as the work at Edendale hospital has developed significantly. We finally managed to get permission to install new play equipment. The old equipment was falling apart with rusty nails, splintered wood, and even some razor wire! That has all been replaced and there is now a new safe playground for the children. Like the Northdale mural, the playground is a tangible reminder of the work of Zanini Bantwana and of God's love for the children. A big 'thank you' to all who contributed to the cost of this project. We are also wondering about offering similar equipment in the other two hospitals.

The ZB team has become an integral part of life in the children's wards. Recently Edendale medics and paramedics decided to implement a programme to provide greater stimulation to the children. Because of ZB's reputation for consistent, high-quality work, they asked to develop the programme around our work. We were, at first, concerned that we might have to compromise on the straight presentation of the Gospel that is at the heart of our work. However, we were assured that we could continue with our content of praying, singing choruses and telling bible stories. There will be added input and support from others including speech therapists and occupational therapists.

Because of the increased demands of the programme, we have employed two further part-time staff. Toyse and Mpume have been visiting the children for the past two years and are highly regarded by the hospital staff. They love the children dearly and are brilliant at interacting with them. At this stage these are temporary appointments, most likely to be made permanent if we continue to have the finances.

**2 Corinthians 2:15**

Sethembile was walking into Greys hospital as usual when she was stopped by one of the security guards. He had seen her coming faithfully day after day and was very curious. Did she have a sick child? Sethembile was able to explain that she was visiting the children, not because she was related to them, but because she wanted to show them that they are important and God loves them.

**Cry the Beloved Country**

His name means 'the nation'. At 3 he has been abandoned by his parents and then by his foster parents because his feet are deformed and he cannot walk properly. He is very healthy and intelligent, but staying in Edendale hospital for weeks until he can have an operation on his feet. Alone in a ward of sick children with staff that change shift every 8 hours, what is he to make of the world? Just one of many stories of children we would like to look after short term while they are waiting to get on with their lives. I left this little boy in hospital as we are not yet ready to look after him. Bringing him home might have been a mistake, but probably not the biggest mistake I have ever made.

**In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God (Phil 4:6)**

- **Praise God** for the great opportunities that exist to show God's love in Word and Deed to the children in hospital and especially the new opportunities at Edendale
- **Thank God** for the provision of two wonderful part-time workers at Edendale – Mpume and Toyse.
- **Pray** that the seed of the Gospel, faithfully sown, will bear fruit in the lives of the children who hear and see it. **Pray** for wisdom about providing play equipment in Grey's and Northdale. **With much love and appreciation of your support,**

**Sheena and Alan**