



Children of Fire

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www.firechildren.org

Newsletter African Autumn 2007

Outreach to the Amangwane Kingdom

The year started well with Sizwe and his adoptive brother Tristan enjoying their joint 6th and 16th birthdays at the stunning Dragon Peaks mountain resort in the Drakensberg Ukhahlamba. They sampled a dragonic menu where choices range from seafood medley to stuffed trout and dragon calamari curry. Standing to attention was a suit of armour in the corner (Sizwe was convinced that "he" was alive and might kill dragons at night) and the walls were decked with swords and a hunting horn. Wooden statues and wrought iron candle holders Africanised the setting.

The relationship with Dragon Peaks began in September 2006 with our search for a venue that would help teenage burns survivors to bond amid beauty and tranquillity. It seems set to go on for years to come.

The towering rocks, birds of prey and rushing streams are matched for their majesty with the royal welcome the Tungay family and staff provide for guests.

But this trip was all the more royal as Sizwe received the unique privilege of becoming the Honorary Grandson of the King of the Amangwane. Never has such a title been bestowed on a six year old Nguni youth before. It brings with it no material wealth but a great wealth of history.

Sizwe did his best to dress for the occasion, complete with spear and shield, and looks forward to spending time with the King and family in the future.

Part of this dream arose from the King in conversation last year, making frequent use of the word "hlophe" (meaning white person) ... which just happens to be Sizwe's original surname. And from another aspiration: that Sizwe should become a pupil at the Drakensberg Boys Choir School when he is about 9 or 10 years old. Then he would have family in the area to keep a watchful eye on him. If anyone is interested in helping provide a bursary around 2010, please remember Sizwe then. He is a natural performer even at this young age and enjoys being on stage. He visited the school and met some young Drakkies and the rector M.S. Dicks. For information on the school visit www.dbchoir.co.za

Strengthening the royal link was Children of Fire's ability to say Thank You to the King for generous hosting of all our teenagers at lunch last year.



Children of Fire – Africa's first burns charity



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There is a saying that "there is no such thing as a free lunch" . . . but it *was* free. The fact that we were able to give back in a productive and unusual way, came as a pleasant surprise to the Royal Family.

The thinking goes "The whole area is in great need of employment. The hillsides are fertile and even in the King's garden there are peaches and grapes."

And so, with the skill of Johannes Mahlangu, an artist from the Ndebele line of princes and the imagination of Children of Fire's director, a logo was designed for Amangwane Royal Jam™. It took the mountain backdrop, a fish eagle from the King's own coat of arms, royal purple and the King's leopard skin trim. Lawyers from Bowman Gilfillan, Johannesburg-based attorneys, registered the logo and name as trade marks.

The King's family and advisors will move ahead with sourcing jam sugar, jars, commercially printed labels, and the best fruit available. The best part of the scheme is that it works with one jam maker in his or her own home or a hundred workers in a factory. From small beginnings we hope that all the best stores and resorts will in the not-too-distant

Who the Amangwane are

(source Glenn Tungay, son of the late Russel

Tungay, Imbongi to the King):



Of the Nguni tribes that settled into Natal from the North and East some seven hundred years ago, several different kingdoms gradually emerged. The Zulu were a small vassal group until Shaka came to power and through superior military training and tactics defeated all the other Kings around him in Natal. Only the Amangwane were never defeated by the Zulu impi and maintained their presence and independence in North-Western Natal.

future be offering Amangwane Royal Jam™.

Sizwe even went to do a little market research on scones with strawberry jam and cream at Champagne Castle Hotel. Afternoon tea encircled by mountains suited the honorary prince very well and gave him lots of energy for trampolining afterwards.

The hotel subsequently offered a magnificent "get away" as a raffle ticket prize at our annual Chocolate Fest. Thanks so much.

And Swedish volunteer Per Herbertsson followed up with a visit to the Amangwane kraal in February, to deliver a gift of shirts from Sizwe "to Grandpa King and my new brothers".

Jam Recipes

If you have good jam recipes in plain English with metric measurements, that could be made on a paraffin stove, over an open fire or in a modern kitchen with electricity, please email them to

firechildren@icon.co.za, subject field:

Recipe Gift for King.

If you can help with jars and labels, let us know.

To this day there are two Kingdoms in KwaZulu Natal of respectively equal size, both with their own sovereign Kings; the Zulu in the East and the Amangwane in the North-West and South.

Smaller vassal Kingdoms of the Amangwane (ruled by Inkosi) include the Amazizi and Amaswazi.

Current discrimination of the Amangwane kingship and culture continues from colonial days when the British found it easier to rule Natal with one King and one language, recognising the Zulu monarch and culture (after the annexure of Zululand) and standardising the Zulu tongue. As such from colonial times all Africans in Natal came to be seen as 'Zulu', even though the Zulu Kingdom only ever held power in the east of the province in Zululand.

While outsiders might ask why any of this matters, one can look at European heritage to understand.

Putting all of Natal's people groups into one 'Zulu' pot is in effect the same as calling all the people groups of the United Kingdom 'English'. Something that would understandably upset the Welsh, Scots and Irish, even though almost all speak the English language and are ruled by one government.

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A Welshman is Welsh and a Scot is a Scot, that is their heritage just as much as an Amangwane is Amangwane and not a Zulu.

The King in Emmaus is the same rank and authority as the Zulu monarch, however he is not recognised or financially supported by the South African government which has to this day continued the traditional lines of rulership set down by the British. However former Deputy President Jacob Zuma is himself an Amangwane and considers the King an essential ally in political support-building, visiting him at his homestead in 2006.

Woo-ah-woo-ah-woo

Also on the outreach heading towards the coast for a swim, Sizwe and Tristan visited Durban fire brigade to go "woo-ah-woo-ah-woo" with the sirens (Sizwe) and to arrange indemnity forms and volunteer shifts (Tristan).

They stayed with Johannesburg School for the Blind trustee Prakash Naidoo and family—a family recently increased by the birth of twins Sitara and Savaan, a girl and a boy to join their big sister Juana (aged 2 going on 3). Congratulations.

Somewhat alarming to non-Hindus was to see the practice of pinning tiny penknives to the chests of both babies, the intention being that these charms would ward off demons. But as a safety charity we had to wonder "what if?" one of the penknives should somehow fall open and itself be a danger.

Keeping in touch with cute Caitlyn

On the return journey Sizwe was overjoyed to meet up with Caitlyn Le Grange, former fellow pupil from the Johannesburg School for the Blind. Caitlyn went blind through the pressure from a brain tumour and used to have the appetite of a mouse. After surgery and surrounded by the affection of her family, she has gone from strength to strength. That's one little girl that we are glad has put on weight now. Her family moved to Pietermaritzburg and Caitlyn attends the Arthur Blaxhall School for the Blind as a day pupil.

Just next door we had hoped to touch base with one of Joburg School for the Blind's first pupils: little Raeez Kuhn but he was late back for the start of the new term at Madrassa An-Noor for the Blind. The Islamic Institute has only four children and 12 adults but has impressive large print and Braille

The issue of recognising an independent King in Western Natal has naturally caused much fracas in the government, as such a move inherently compromises not only the government budget to some point (Zulu King Zweletini gets in the region of R30 million a year) but also all of the convenient tourist packaging that goes with the idea of a unified 'Kingdom of the Zulus'. Let's hope that history has it's fair trial and truth is allowed to see a politically-biased past corrected.



Sad also to learn of the crime and prejudice which the family had faced, has led them to seriously considering leaving South Africa.

Korans as a service to Moslems with low vision or blindness. www.mnblind.org



Sizwe was excited to meet his old friend Caitlyn after so many months.

Eating "Go Slow" in Imbali, Maritzburg

Sizwe went to visit teenage burns survivor Londeka Ngidi's school ML Sultan and her home in Imbali . . as well as accompanying Londeka to the *Natal Witness* to talk about the forthcoming Kilimanjaro Expedition. The family hosted him overnight with chicken and rice for dinner cooked by her Aunt Betty and a snack pack of "Go slow". These are pretty similar to NikNak chips (savoury snacks) but are part of the spaza-shop-type home industry. Small plastic bags cost about fifty cents where their commercial counterpart would cost R1.50, so spending money goes slower... hence the name.

Then a power-cut and off to bed by candlelight before the long drive back to Johannesburg.

Chatterbox Sizwe listened to the CD made specially for him and commented at *every* cow he saw grazing on the hillsides. "Cows! Look cows! Not alone." He was concerned that the cows should not be alone. He sometimes "counted" the cows - a large number was always "sixteen" . . the highest consecutive number that he could reach at that time.

The scenery for at least half the route home reminded me of how a friend described South Africa some 20 years ago, before I came here. He called it: "God's own country." Sometimes we need to feast our eyes upon the craggy rocks, the lush green hillsides, the weeping willows, silver birches and flat topped thorn trees, to remember just how lucky we are.

Bronwen Jones

Medical research begins on Johannesburg burns

On 26th January our researcher Marietta Neumann attended the Medical Ethics Committee meeting of the University of the Witwatersrand and registrar Willem Erasmus received permission for the study of burns statistics to proceed at Johannesburg General Hospital. Protocol number M070124.

We were also asked to assist Dr Tom Cahill of University College, London, UK with a study he is mak-

ing of paediatric hot coal and braai injuries in South Africa. We do not have data on such injuries but if anyone else does, please email him on:

t.cahill@ucl.ac.uk

Subsequently we've started discussing a wider burns society to link richer nations and poor nations— maybe there will be feedback by end-2007.

Greenside High School pupils study book on fire

A talk to pupils at the Greenside High School in February 2007 was requested to prepare them for the set work: *No Turning Back* by Beverley Naidoo. The story covers a woman whose shack burned down. The talk led to the pupils collecting 2330 plastic bread-packet-closing tags for us to use in tactile art, and money that they spent on washing packs for Disaster Recovery Bags and hospital trips. The grade 8 pupils came to visit on March 22nd 2007 and next year's pupils will make this an annual event.

The link also led to a request to host some "difficult" pupils as it was thought an afternoon or two with Children of Fire would be more sobering to troublesome teenagers than just making them pick up litter in the playground.

Prison for teens

We pointed out to Greenside's staff that really lively teenagers can spend a weekend in prison—without being convicted. It provides a good wake-up call to sleep over in juvenile offenders' cells—for details contact prison governor Kenny Bouwer on: 011 933 7132

Grade 7 pupils from Crawford School, Fourways, read a book *Out of the Dust* which looked at burns injuries and how they affected the community, and so asked advice from the charity so that they could produce a leaflet on Children of Fire. Sadly we never got to see the finished product, but we'd still like to.

There was also a visit from Crawford School Sandton on March 20th 2007 where the grade 11 pupils did beading with our disabled children. It was meant to be a two venue project but they refused to meet our squatter camp children and as a result, the director requested that they should write an essay on social prejudice. The beading was much enjoyed by all but the assumption that a community safety charity would in any way risk the safety of school pupils, made us sad. Likewise the assumption that poor people who live in shacks are inherently dangerous. Those families are our long-term friends.

Teachers abandon their special needs pupils in Zimbabwe

The number of teachers flocking to our school in search of work makes one wonder how on earth the children of Zimbabwe are expected to learn? The would-be teachers say there is no money and no food at home. Well qualified people, some even with special-needs training, have in many cases put pride to one side and are working as bricklayers and house cleaners in South Africa. Some can't get correct documents to travel because there is no passport paper left in Zimbabwe! Another Zimbabwean

link that delivers goods to the beleaguered nation had the misfortune for a driver to try smuggling cigarettes. The man was arrested, the vehicle impounded, and the employer of a petty criminal had to pay R100 000 to get their own truck back.

Must our neighbour collapse before it can try to build its economy up again? And in the meantime, what happens to the generation of Zimbabwean children who need education and nutrition?

Blind Free State farm girl gets chance to learn

Riaan and Dorothy Cilliers came across a girl in the rural Free State who was blind from glaucoma and who had never been to school in her life.

11-year-old Katrinky Khanye joined us in early January and within two weeks of arrival, she could type the whole alphabet in Braille. She is shy and gets easily tired from being overweight but the other pupils encourage her to exercise every day.



Bereaved Thulani braves K wire removal after foot surgery

Thulani Nhleko's surgery to his right foot went well. But in his absence from the rural areas in mid February he lost his eight year old brother Jason to HIV-Aids and a few days later, his aunt Mina to complications from appendicitis. Then in late March his father died from HIV-Aids. Too much to bear for a boy left motherless since 2001.

On Monday February 19th he returned to hospital for the removal of K-wires from his four toes. It was not done under general anaesthetic and local anaesthetic would not work on bone, but the pain was excruciating. It seems that maybe some form of pre-med could be used; something to make the process more humane.

Another surgeon commented: "When the wires come

out they can leave an uncomfortable vacuum. If they are bent or curved, it's another matter. Often though, the wires soften to the extent that they fall away."

In Thulani the little toe wire was bent. He bled quite a lot after the wire removal and was unable to walk, even with crutches. But a month later on March 12th 2007 he returned for surgery on the next foot. So far he has not built up the dread of doctors that some children exhibit after repeated surgery. He was discharged on March 28th and is looking forward to wearing the enormous sheepskin slippers that the Dis-Chem Foundation has sourced for him.

We hope he might be part of the Kilimanjaro climb in June if his feet heal well.

Media spotlight shines on volunteers and children again

Marietta Neumann gave an interview across the Middle East on the Al Jazeera television network, about the work of the charity with Sizwe, Feleng, Sicelo, Dorah, Nhlanhla, Vincent all alongside.

Two of our volunteers Helene van Rhyn and James Phosa were mentioned in the March 2007 issue of *Fair Lady* in an article entitled: *Be Kind... It's Good For You*. Others were interviewed but their pictures did not make it this time. Here's one of the "Sunday Picnic Girls" Jessica, Nicky and Stacey who have

been visiting the children nearly every fortnight.



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Thulani was in the *Sunday Times* on February 25th 2007; Japanese volunteer Tomoko Harada was in the *Northcliffe Melville Times* on February 27th 2007; Anele was in the *Fourways Review* in February (though we never got to see a copy); our blind children were photographed by the *Daily Sun* and *Beeld* on February 22nd; and all the children were photographed by *Deutsche Presse Agentur* when they had an educational visit to the Geneva Swiss Confectionary business, Café Kranzler on February 21st.

They were also photographed the same day by the *Daily Sun* and by *Beeld* with Greenside High School pupil Boitumelo Tsotetsi. Her fellow pupils who admitted to the charity that they had played the

Adoption minefield, looking back, looking forward

So many of our children would be better off if they had loving families of their own. A family is always a better option than an institution but officialdom makes it so hard.

In July 2005 we had a South African doctor who had emigrated to the USA, who was prepared to adopt a boy without feet and one hand whom Children of Fire had helped over many years. It was the best chance the boy would ever get. His biological mother had made it patently clear for years that she did not want him - he had spent most of his life in a children's home. But we had to find a psychiatrist who would state that the mother of the boy was competent to take the decision about his adoption. She had someone treating her for depression and several attempts at suicide, but the man did not want to do the paper work.

Caring for the carers and upgrading their skills

Felix Neumann has taken it on his shoulders to teach childcare workers James Phosa and Abigail Ximba how to swim. Despite some initial anxiety, they are making progress. Two of our school's teachers can swim a little.

The children get in the pool most afternoons throughout the summer. Bongani is a confident swimmer and Sizwe can swim a full width but does not realise he can! The others have a way to go. One of the problems has been with so many having surgery, is that on a hot day they want to get into a pool but cannot if their wound dressings have to remain dry.

Both James and Abigail are on the year-long Saturday courses at the [Professional Child Care College](#)

devastatingly-stupid game of setting deodorant spray alight with flame, bravely stepped up to have their photographs taken - duly printed in the *Rosebank Kilarney Gazette*.

And Tomoko Harada appeared in *City Vision* on Wednesday March 7th 2007, after assisting deliver disaster relief supplies at the Marlboro fire at the beginning of the month. Our help after the fire was also covered in the *Alex News*.

The Chocolate Fest on March 24th 2007 was covered on Highveld Stereo, Radio 702 and on Kaya FM news bulletins as well as in the *Saturday Star* and on the Sunday evening show *Positive Talk*, and in other *Caxton* press. www.fairlady.co.za

So we got on the email network to search for private psychiatrists who would help.

The family that the boy came from, had been on "self destruct" from the beginning; provision of free alcohol to workers in the Cape wine lands might have had a lot to do with it. The biological father was in jail awaiting trial for a considerable period of time, for allegedly raping his daughter. All that said, the fact that he only learned about the adoption on the day that the papers were to be signed, left the man trembling with emotion. He still loved his son and did not want to just sign him away.

There are two sides to every story and while we see countless examples of terrible parenting, some of those parents still have a heart.

The solution would be a lot more good hardworking social workers and parenting classes in schools.

in Melville ([011 482 3378](tel:0114823378)) and because multi-skilling is such a vital part of a small charity, the [Garden Shop](#) ([011 516 9700](tel:0115169700)) which provides our Christmas tree each year, is also going to start a one-day-a-week course for James. Then he will be able to teach the children how to plant and grow simple vegetables and herbs and generally tend the garden (or supervise its care) rather than the normal SA-gardener approach which is to sweep paths, cut lawns and trim trees—but nothing that involves much skill and botanical knowledge.

Beyond training, psychological counselling has also been arranged for staff and volunteers who often come from difficult backgrounds.

Drakensberg burned baby's screams not heard by deaf mother

Late one evening in February 2007, Sofi Cogley from a hospice in the Drakensberg Mountains, emailed us the picture of a 14-month-old toddler Nthobisi Nene with burns sustained on the top of his head seven months previously. His mother is deaf and allegedly a drinker; his father is dead. It seemed inconceivable that he had not been admitted to a good hospi-

tal... but five minutes after her email was sent, we were chatting on the phone about the way ahead. He has since seen a good doctor, the head is healing and we visited him in late March 2007. Sofi came to know of Children of Fire when the teenage burns survivors visited Falcon Ridge in October 2006.

Lotions and potions might ease scarring

Lots of people come to see us with lotions, potions and more. Without a scientific study it is hard to tell how effective certain skin creams are. Skin healing depends very much on the individual and their own ability to heal, propensity to keloids (raised scars), etc. And happy kids heal better than sad kids. But so long as a product does no harm and might do some good, we are prepared to try some of them out.

Currently Anele Nyongwane age 6 is using Jouvence Cream made by Jean D'Avèze of France.

It is "recommended for burns, post-operative tissue damage and scarring" and some Medical Aids will cover its costs. Contact Annie van Jaarsfeld on

annie.vj@omnident.co.za

And then there are The Silver Lab's ionic colloidal silver homeopathic products - cream, gel and liquid which "help prevent microbial infections". Ian McQueen says paramedics could use the liquid to wash burn wounds at a fire scene. If emergency services are interested in trying it out, contact ianmcqueen@mweb.co.za

Hairy palms and hairy noses: electrolysis please!

Once sitting in reconstructive surgeon Gavin de Aguiar's waiting room at Milpark Hospital, Johannesburg, I had a conversation with a man aged about 35 who had been badly burned at about age two. Apparently he had seen glowing bar heaters and out of curiosity had wrapped his toddler palm around the (unshielded) element "to feel it warm up", having first turned it on. He nearly lost his hand from the electric shock burn, but for the skills of some talented British surgeon who had been visiting the country at the time. That surgeon took skin from

the little boy's bum and put it in his hand. Several decades later, the man had a hairy palm because apparently he was destined to have a hairy backside once he reached adulthood.

And one of our children who has had a nose rebuilt, has a hairy nose. Not furry like a hound nor hair protruding from the nostrils, but hairy nonetheless.

So dear surgeons, before you snip or tissue-expand, please contemplate the least inappropriately hirsute solution where possible. Werewolves are for story books!

Bronwen Jones

The Sandton Housewife Syndrome

You are so sweet. Middle class. Middle Aged. Well groomed but not over the top. A mother. A wife. These characteristics define you. Your children are grown up or nearly there. You've had a career along the way, but shorter than some because you ran the home. Your husband still is a professional accountant, lawyer, business man. You don't need the money. But you will need to justify to him why you give your time freely to others. You will particularly need to justify why you help black people (yes, South Africa has not moved on very far in these post-apartheid days). Oh and to help disfigured or disabled people? Yes, that will take some more convincing on the home front. In fact you probably won't tell him first of all.

And then there is your car. It is a smaller and cheaper model than his. But it is still rather nice and relatively new. So no, you could not take it to squatter camps. And you could not take it to hospitals. Well certainly not state hospitals. You are rather surprised that we'd ask.

Yes you want to volunteer. You look at our office piled high with messy papers, and look slightly less convinced....

We try to define what we think is a simple, manageable task that will hardly disturb your various comfort

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zones. Could you organise a donation of supplies from xyz company for xyz event for the charity? Or could you arrange an uncomplicated outing e.g. half a dozen children to the theatre?

We sit you down with a seasoned volunteer so that you can "workshop" some ideas together. You leave with the heartfelt promise to do task X or task Y. You don't even know that we have handled you with kid gloves. You go away feeling good and righteous and helpful. You are going to make a difference. You are going to give back.

And that is the end of that. Something happens in your mind - back in your comfortable home in suburbia where no disability or poverty intrudes into your daily thoughts ... except maybe on the TV news... but you can always turn that off.... And you never come back.

You don't think what else WE could have done with that hour or two. You don't think how hard it is to be nice to that sweet-natured woman who walks through our doors again and *again* and *again* in your various guises. We really do try our best to accommodate you; to make you welcome. But just think of one question - what does it do to the souls of people working in this difficult field every day, when you come to "play volunteer," raise our hopes (because we SO want to believe you) and you let us down. And the *next one* and the *next one*.

If you are thinking of volunteering anywhere - read about the charity first on its website. Any charity worth its salt now has a website. And don't waste their time. Do the easy thing and put a cheque in the post and go and have some aromatherapy instead. You'll feel better and so will we.

For the special ones who "make the grade" - read *Fair Lady*, March 2007, p54. [WEBSITE LINK](#)

Fire fighting volunteer beats the need to sleep

UMashesha Tristan Jones (16) began his volunteer fire fighting in February 2007 at Durban Central Fire Station... and the teenager learned on his first shift that human beings are fallible. He first attended a false alarm where someone was fumigating a building and passers-by thought it was smoke; and then a building fire. But by 2a.m. he was so sound asleep that the seasoned fire fighters - who of course had had a good rest *before* work - left him snoozing! It is hard to have a normal school day and think one can stay awake all night. Fire fighters must be alert as they have 45 seconds after an alarm to be in their gear and ready to go.

Tristan determined to find a way to sleep for a couple of hours between school and future shifts .. or, transport permitting, to move to the Saturday night shift.

In March, he saw first-hand the horror of excess alcohol* as he assisted to cut through mangled metal at a car crash - the driver and the passengers had *all* been drinking, and alcohol was strewn across the vehicle. And at another incident where a car had hardly a scrape on it, he saw how people can also waste the time of the emergency services when the fire fighters might be needed elsewhere to save lives.

After Durban's severe storms, the young lad had to help remove a corpse from under a tree. The woman had been in the elements for too long and the sad image remained etched on his mind. At other times he had to deal with truck engine fires and petrol spills. It's really not like the *Fireman Sam* story books at all!

**Please remember: If you like to drink liquor, get someone else to drive.*

Help older pupils to complete their schooling countrywide

There needs to be more provision for disabled people who start school late, to be able to continue their education. Our facility for blind pupils only goes up to Grade 7 with some additional Braille classes for older people with assistance from SA Blind. So where do you turn if your son suddenly goes blind in Grade 9? Or your epileptic blind daughter aged 20 has not completed primary school? These are the kinds of requests we get daily

- even from people employed *within* the Department of Education or the Department of Health. Our intention was not even to be a boarding facility, but out of compassion we offered a limited number of weekly boarding places to blind youth. It is not enough. If you have the chance to help with more, small, catch-up places for learning countrywide, consider it please. If our expertise can help, we will happily share it.

Green (yellow) (blue) gel stoves

The article below is repeated with kind permission of Brian Paxton of the Mbendi newsletter. It questions how "environmentally-friendly" alternative fuels really are, because while none of us likes paraffin, there is no point leaping out of the frying pan into the fire. Children of Fire has also been asked by the Gauteng Provincial Action Committee for Children to make a presentation about ethanol gel fuels and alternatives, in April 2007.

Biofuels have been bothering me lately. The logic seems to be that countries can reduce consumption of crude oil derived fuels by mandating the blending of ethanol with gasoline and diesel. Ethanol is most usually made from sugar cane, maize, palm oil or other plant material. As these plants grow, they absorb carbon dioxide which is again released into the atmosphere when the ethanol is burned. This should be much better for the environment than burning oil or coal. So far so good.

Crude oil comes out of the ground ready for refining. Before one can make ethanol, ground has to be cleared, fields ploughed, fertiliser and herbicide manufactured and spread, water pumped into the irrigation system and the crop harvested and moved to the factory. All these steps take energy, the more so when the land undulates or the climate is moderate, which is why Brazil with its flat plains and wet, semi-tropical climate is better for growing sugar cane for ethanol than most other places in the world.

A study in the USA, by contrast, has shown that the process of creating ethanol from maize can consume 27% more energy than is contained in the resulting ethanol. The Netherlands has ethanol refineries which use imported palm oil; however environmentalists there now worry that the Indonesian tropical forests being mown down to plant oil palms absorbed much more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than are saved by palm-oil derived ethanol.

Sugar coating Batswana nurses

Gelukspan matron Puleng Sello could hardly believe her ears when Children of Fire phoned her one March weekend. Though the hospital has received Easter Eggs for the paediatric wards from us a few Aprils ago and has twice had toys, she was astonished at our request. "We have about 150 nurses...

And biofuels cost money to produce. First there's the capital cost of the land, agricultural machinery and processing plant, then there's the operating cost. To help them out, governments generously use taxpayer's money to subsidise production. In the case of South Africa, economists estimate the taxpayer could fork out more than R 2 billion a year for subsidies. US\$ 0.52 a gallon subsidies in the USA have caused ethanol production to triple in three years, with producers smiling all the way to the bank. Some one third of the profits of food giant Archer Daniels Midland now come from biofuels.

But that's not the only call on the wallet of the taxpaying consumer. As land is converted from food to fuel production, so food prices have risen. In Mexico there were riots when the cost of maize for nachos tripled and in the USA net returns from corn this year could be US\$ 334 per acre versus US\$ 125 last year as farmers play off the food and biofuels markets against each other. Strong demand in the USA and Europe for biofuels has led to prices of malting barley, used in making beer, rising by 85% since May 2006. In South Africa, where plants are mooted to produce ethanol from maize, many farmers have not seen a drop of rain since November and their crop forecasts are dismal, while a hot, dry summer is also forecast for US maize farmers.

As I cycle to work each day, I pass long lines of cars with one or two aboard, engines idling aimlessly. In old Peking millions cycled to work beneath blue skies; now, under a pall of pollution, more than one thousand shiny new cars join China's jams each day. We suffer from motoring madness, like lemmings headed for a cliff, hungry, impoverished, breathless. The problem to be addressed urgently is that there are too many of us on this planet and we are fast running out of fuel, food, minerals and clean air. When we recalculate the costs and carbon, we could well find it's a case of bio-fools, not biofuels.

www.mbendi.com

you are bringing boxes of imported chocolates for them all...?!" That's exactly what we did on March 26th 2007 - just one small way to show these dedicated health professionals that someone appreciates them. Gelukspan Hospital, North West Province. Tel: 018 3369 200.

Necessities of life ease suffering after the Marlboro Fire

Some 65 families lost everything in a fire in a Marlboro squatter camp on the edge of Alexandra township on Wednesday 28th February (*nearest corner 1st and 3rd, close to Pretoria Main Road*).



The cause of the fire was not known. As it occurred in the middle of the day when most people were alert and awake, there were no major injuries. On March 1st 2007 Children of Fire delivered disaster recovery packs including such items as second hand clothes, blankets, soap powder, toothbrushes, toothpaste, safety candle holders with candles, Danish butter cookies, basic foodstuffs including at least one 5kg bag of Iwisa mielie meal for each family, soup, pilchards, tea, Dove soap, Dawn moisturising lotion, hats, writing materials, magazines and lots of toys.

Some heads of household included: Victor Maake, Habas Mallane, Grace Sebela, Dynah Matjila, Germinah Rapetso, Dorcus Molopo, Evah Maake, Zarazara Ndlovu, Erick Sebela, Huring Ephraim, Bessie Mayokotela, Maphela Mophopi, Noita Baloyi, Reedban Mokari, Nkhesani Masisinyani, Amos Xivambu, Lucas Hlungwani, Isaac Langa, Settlers Chauke, Edward Hlongwane, Edward Mbezi, Khesani Shivabu, Daniel Ringani, Mike Sebona, Albert Gobola, White Maluleke, Edwin Sathekge.

Toy run to Umtata General Hospital in the Eastern Cape

Several international volunteers arrived at the hospital's reception at 7:50 after we had to search for the sign that we had seen on our way through Umtata two days before. It was only put up in one direction of the road. Economy of sorts.

The reception was tranquil, few people were waiting and no noise came from anywhere.

I spoke to both women sitting behind the counter at the reception. They asked me to wait for the hospital manager who was to come at eight o' clock. I

The second trip assisted families headed by: Solly Rakwale, Thomas Ndlovu, Hangalakani Letswalo, Precious Mangane, David Baloyi, Maczimel Baloyi, Tue-king Langa, Happy Mkansi, Falizwe Mnginisi, Golden Letswala, Trix Malame, Ephraim Makhubela, Pamuel Chauke, Kenneth Chauke, Magic Chauke, Solly Shitzinga, Bally Letswalo, Marika Moseisi, Emily Lekoata, Joseph Langa, Thomas Baloyi, Louis Shivambu, Bassa Machukucla, Traccia Mosesi, Emanuel Mabasa, Samson Baloyi, Sam Nghonyama, Betty Ramashala, Eric Chuma, Richard Khosa, Lucky Maluleke and Daniel Hlongwane.

Many babies on backs and young children were affected - but the toys took their minds of their troubles for a while.

Thanks to UMashesha volunteers Felix Neumann, James Phosa, Tomoko Harada and Michelle Daniels. Thanks to Edward Upton for the loan of his bakkie. And thanks to many individual donors as well as Dis-Chem, listeners to Jacaranda FM and Premier Foods.

The largely Shangaan, Venda and Pedi community were supplied with building poles by Disaster Management and spent Thursday hammering out the buckled corrugated iron, rebuilding their homes. Rebuilding their lives will take longer, especially trying to replace vital documentation like school matriculation certificates, now just ashes underfoot. We revisited on March 14th with more Dawn lotion and biscuits.

Children of Fire would like donations of non-perishable foods, saucepans, Parasafe stoves and tin openers, to assist fire survivors in future. Thank you Investec's Cradle Group for 70 saucepans to use next time that we are phoned for help.

told them that we had to go back all the way to Johannesburg the same day and we could not wait for long, so they phoned the manager and said "He is on his way". Already knowing that this phrase could mean anything between five minutes and five hours, we decided to wait until 8 o' clock and if the manager wasn't there in time, we would have to leave the toys and hope they were safe.

While fellow volunteers Per and Wolfgang were guarding the car, Tomoko and I waited inside. We waited until five minutes past eight, then I went to

the receptionist again and told her that we would have to leave now because there were still more than 10 hours of driving ahead.

Her face was rather expressionless, so I wondered how helpful she would be. She took Tomoko and I to a conference room where we found about eight to ten nurses and sisters sitting along several tables, with the senior nurse sitting at the head of the table. Ms Lizwiwe Mbalo was probably in her mid-forties. She was very kind, polite and courteous to Tomoko and I.

In the beginning we were standing between the open door and the head nurse, I felt like I was intruding at some secret council! But Ms Mbalo's kindness soon released the tension.

She made me close the door, and I gave a short explanation about what we are doing, where we were from and why we were in Umtata. I still felt like I was stealing some important people's time.

Then we were asked us to sit down at their table,

which made me feel honoured in a slightly strange way. The other members of the council were listening silently, when Ms Mbalo stood up and gave a small speech to Tomoko and I, where she expressed gratitude.

Listening to the head nurses' words I felt that she was speaking as a true servant of the children in the hospital, she seemed to have the ethical conscience that a nurse should have and I trusted her to take the toys to children in need. (At some hospitals we know staff have stolen donations). She articulated her gratitude towards two young volunteers from overseas who were coming from Johannesburg, *the* big city - and they were there, in Umtata, in the small provincial hospital, giving their time, attention and toys - despite their origin lying in far away distance, not in Johannesburg, but in Japan and Germany.

Felix Neumann began volunteering in January 2007. Gap year and graduate volunteers can apply by emailing their CVs to the charity.

Notice Board

Hooray. Bryanston Parallel Medium Primary School in late February 2007 moved **Zenette (8) and Precious (9)** from Afrikaans into the English-language stream. Now "foster" mum Nolwandle will be able to help them with

Gym Search

Our burned teenagers in different parts of the country need to start "gyming". Please help Londeka, Bongani and maybe Shivani to attend Virgin Active or Body Dynamics in Pietermaritzburg to prepare for Kilimanjaro.

Feedback:

- ◆ "Your organisation does amazing things!" Anne Kiepiel, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa
- ◆ "Well done as always for your wonderful work!" Caroline McGovern, AMB Financial Holdings, Illovo
- ◆ "Enjoyed reading the news letter." Patricia E Wade, Presidents Award For Youth Empowerment Trust

Telkom celebration

Thanks to Sindi Madlala of Telkom's Career Management Centre (CMC) for organising a special gathering at Children of Fire in January 2007, and to all the staff who contributed.

Burns Night

Northcliff Rotarians held a Burns supper in our aid on January 25th 2007. The donation will be handed over in early April 2007.

Welcome back (briefly) to Geerlande Homburg, a specialist in teaching blind and low vision children, who visited us in March 2007. Thanks for bringing Braille machines and a tactile globe.

Sweeten up the fire fighters

Friday 30th March brought a smile to 97 fire fighters' faces at Durban Central Fire Station as they became the happy recipients of imported Austrian *Milka* chocolate. Children of Fire named each thank-you-package for the men and women who risk their lives to help us. Thanks guys and gals for all that you do.

Upcoming medical appointments

Zenette returns to Baragwanath hand unit in June 2007

Anele has a checkup in April before planning further surgery.

Sizwe looks set to have a facial release at Carstenhof as soon as an obliging anaesthetist can be found.

Zanele's surgery took place on March 27th.

Sicelo has stents that look like macaroni in his nose and he keeps losing them, so his nose will be tackled again around May 20th.

Bongani ear implants were exposed on 27th March but the CEO of the CSIR was not interested in fixing the machine that could and should have made him a beautiful rapid prototyped ear.

Loaves and Fishes for Easter

People again pleaded for places at Beka's free-of-charge Easter Holiday Activity Week and are already signing up for the one starting September 25th 2007. Disabled or disadvantaged children watched Charlotte's Web at the National Youth Theatre, made lots of Easter crafts, did African drumming, had reflexology and much more. They played on the theme of loaves and fishes with art made from those little flat plastic white clips that tie bread bags used to mimic the scales of fish, when stuck onto cardboard templates. In September the focus will be on South African heritage.

Email for a place now.

Toy and lotion delivery to Coronation Hospital paediatric wards in Johannesburg on Tuesday 6th March 2007 - pics by Per Herbertsson and Tomoko Harada. Matron Makedi 011 470 9310 appreciated them and gave us a thank you card. That's a first!

Disaster Management

Kgafane Matheba is doing his masters on the socio economic costs of shack fires via the CSIR. He came to see Children of Fire for advice in March. If you want to know how his research is going, email kgafane.matebane@ndmc.pwv.gov.za But if you bought one of our raffle tickets from him, please note they weren't returned.

Books

Every now and then we get phoned by publishers to request including a section of our website in a school text book. Rousouw Via Africa is publishing a title *On our own two feet* for Life Orientation in Grade 9 and asked to include material from the collaboration between Children of Fire and the SAPS on township safety. Tel: 021 448 6180 for when it will be available.

Fire Crackers burn hands

The Hand Unit at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital dealt with 33 firecracker hand injuries over a couple of days, all stemming from New Year "celebrations". Only five of those injured were children, but many of the others were young adults.

Sheffield University

Thanks to Oliver Kilvert and Rowena Heap for telling twenty-four thousand Sheffield University students about the charity in late February 2007.

Now if only *Voyager Properties* would lend us another volunteer house, that would make accommodating the potential influx of helpers a lot easier! And if anyone else can help house future volunteers based in Johannesburg, please let us know.

Sponsors urgently needed for Kilimanjaro jackets, sleeping bags, trousers and boots.

Be part of a once-in-a-lifetime experience for our teenage burns survivors.

P.S.: A private jet would help.

Speedy Samkelo Gonzales

A sprinter of note, Samkelo Radebe (17) excels at 100 metres, 200 m, 400m and at long jump and high jump. He broke more than 10 South African records for disabled people.

He suffered electrical burns at the age of 9 where he lost both hands.

He has been assisted by Children of Fire since then. In 2006 he has been to Manchester in the UK on a special trip for excelling sportsmen of Hope School. Apart from his sports career he is now studying law at the University of Johannesburg.

Sparkles and Skunks

Sparkles to:

- ◆ Kraft Foods Milka brand for making so many children, volunteers, doctors, nurses, firefighters and other helpers across the country smile for the elegant boxes of Milka Naps we shared with them.
- ◆ Prof George Psaras for arranging such speedy surgery on Thulani Nhleko's other foot.
- ◆ Pietermaritzburg Fire Brigade for hosting burns survivors and volunteers in March.

Skunks to:

- ◆ The b@#tard who robbed blind 6-year-old pupil Nhlanya's mother at knifepoint in February near the Bree Street taxi rank, Johannesburg, taking her cell phone. The thief was 1.6 metres tall, very dark with close cropped hair, average build and with a scar like an old knife wound, on his face.
 - ◆ The other thief who robbed burned 3-year-old Zanele's mother of her cell phone, also in the centre of Joburg, also in February.
- Please never buy a second hand cell phone.* You don't know who was stabbed to get it.

Thank You

Greenside Plumbing thanks for prison magazines delivery even if not for fixing the dripping taps (yet).

Slam Pool thanks. After a green fortnight from the troublesome effects of rain, we asked Slam Pools to put the sparkle back in the water. A day of "alum" and Sizwe walked into the garden to announce "Who put the blue back in the pool?!"

Thanks to Bruce Arnott and Associates for the inspiring posters of Kilimanjaro that the children have.
menlynver@iafrica.com

Thanks to Gillian Nicholetts of WM Logistics for the occasional loan of Aubrey their driver for hospital lifts and for help in other ways.

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Account number: 614 920 23919

Sort code: 25-65-05

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Children of Fire

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