

Seed Of Hope

Community Development

More than just a blanket



A few days ago, a friend dropped off some clothing and other goods to be given to families in need. As she handed us the last armful, a stack of hand-knitted blankets, she paused thoughtfully.

"I made these blankets as 'goodbye gifts' about fifteen years ago when I was planning to commit suicide," she confided. There was one for each family member – the last one she made was for her husband. "But by the time I had made that one, God had begun working in my life, and was bringing me out of alcoholism and depression."

So she'd kept them, all these years, warm and familiar reminders of God's presence during her darkest hours.

"I don't need to hold onto them anymore, and I think someone else should have them now."

Humbled, we thanked her for her gift. Soon those blankets will once again convey the love of God to a hurting family.

Carl Waldron

Carl Waldron
CEO, Seed Of Hope

Thank you, Scott & Shauna!



In December we said farewell to Scott and Shauna Cowan, Canadian volunteers whose year with Seed Of Hope brought them into the lives of many grateful South Africans – and some fellow Canadians!

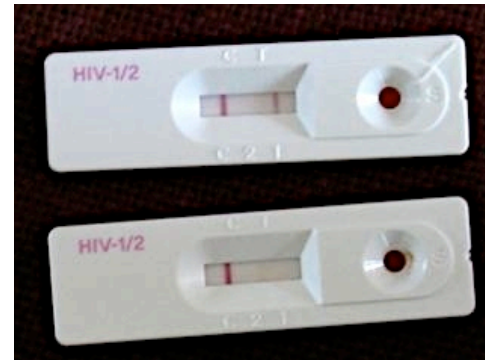
The Cowans invested nearly half their time here in the lives of promising students from the local high school, developing the *Live Out Loud* program (see the August '08 SOH newsletter on our website), tackling topics like personal goal setting, team building and giving back to the community. At the request of all the students, Seed Of Hope will continue to offer and expand the program this year.

Scott used his handyman skills to help repair the high school, Seed Of Hope's facility, and the home of Gogo Evelina, a volunteer whose house had been badly damaged by thieves. His abilities even gained him the praise of George, Seed Of Hope's groundskeeper (no small accomplishment), who often sought Scott's help!

Shauna organized and administered a child sponsorship program with one of our funding partners, that provides for an afternoon meal to over 130 children daily. She also coordinated visiting teams of volunteers and personally connected with many of the youth and children whose families are dealing with heartache and hardship.

Though they are missed, their impact will remain, through the growth in the areas where they served. Thank you, Scott and Shauna! We miss you, and pray God's abundant blessings for you.

Permission denied



During the After-School Program's final class of 2008, the 40 students were given slips of paper on which to anonymously answer two questions.

Over the previous few months, Michelle Waldron, a Registered Nurse and volunteer teacher in the class of 11-15 year-olds, had been providing in-depth AIDS education and appealing to the students to talk to their families about the virus – and to take the simple, 5-minute Rapid HIV Test.

The questions were as follows:

- 1. Do you know your HIV status?** (They were not asked to disclose their status, just whether they knew it.)
- 2. If you do not know your status, why haven't you been tested?**

Of the 35 students who responded, only 5 knew their status, three of whom were tested by us.

The most common responses to question #2 were, "I'm scared of being labeled with the disease," and "My mother/granny/aunt will not give permission for me to be tested."

Approximately one in four South Africans is infected by HIV. Time and again, it is the paralyzing *fear* of the diagnosis that prevents people from combating the disease and the devastation it is wreaking upon families.

In Seed Of Hope's battle against HIV, we are determined to weaken the virus's strongest ally: its stigma. Our plan is to increase HIV testing and counseling, organize awareness events in our community, and continue educating and mentoring the children who come to our centre each day. Thank you for joining us in this fight against fear.

Tireless Volunteer

On a typical Tuesday morning, Stienie Lourens leaves her home in Amanzimtoti for the short drive to Seed Of Hope just after 7am. At that hour, the streets in the township are lined with schoolchildren in their uniforms, adults are walking into town for the start of their workday, and taxi buses noisily carry dozens of passengers from their homes in Bhekulwandle into 'Toti, or on to Durban.

Waiting at the gate, Stienie usually finds one or two people, often a mother with a child or a teenager, who have come because they need a ride to the clinic.

She visits as she drives them there, sits in the waiting room while they are counseled and tested for HIV, and brings them home after they are given the test results. Sometimes her passengers are there to learn how to follow the regimen of anti-retroviral (ARV) medications that can sustain them and keep AIDS at bay. Without Stienie, they might not be able to get to the clinic, or might simply be too nervous to go on their own.

On many weekdays, Stienie works alongside Ernestina, our sewing class instructor, keeping her company and helping with tasks to be done in the training room. God has blessed her with a caring personality, a warm smile, and a heart willing to serve her "neighbours" in Bhekulwandle. We thank God for blessing us with volunteers like Stienie!



Dentist Appointment

In October, Dr. Nathan Kern and Dr. Karien Steyn spent several days at Seed Of Hope, providing free dental care to children, support group members, residents of Bhekulwandle township. Despite an airline mishap preventing their luggage (filled with dental equipment) from reaching them in Durban, they were undeterred. A local dentist, Dr. Botha, was kind

enough to lend them some equipment so that they could perform dental checkups, cleanings for all the children in our Simunye program, and hundreds of extractions! Even Gogo, our faithful volunteer, had some work done, and proclaimed herself a satisfied customer. At the end of it all, we were happy to learn that the missing dental equipment was reunited with them on their way back through Johannesburg! Thank you, Drs. Kern and Steyn! We look forward to our next appointment!



S T A F F S P O T L I G H T

Spar Gumede was one of the first staff members at Seed Of Hope, and has served in a variety of ministry areas. She currently leads the HIV Support Group, and the Adopt-A-Family ministry that links church groups in Amanzimtoti with families in Bhekulwandle.

the course was over then I asked if I can join SOH as a volunteer. I was so welcome.

2007. Since January 2008, I have been coordinating the HIV / AIDS Ministry. We have two support groups that

I must say that God has used me in mighty ways in this Ministry. We had a support group when I first joined SOH, but it didn't work for some reason. It amazes me to see the way this group has grown from nothing to the group of 40 people. Most of them are so healthy and happy, and above all they came to know Christ.

When and how did you become involved with SOH?

I have joined Seed Of Hope in April 2004. At that time I was involved with the Church of the Nazarene which is located next to the centre. Once when I was there, [founder] Derek Liebenberg announced that they were hosting training on HIV/AIDS counseling. I took that opportunity to do it. When



Spar's roles encompass teaching, counseling, health consulting, and group facilitation. Then of course, she is also "Mom" to three growing and active kids!

Which ministry areas have you been involved in?

At first I served in children's ministry for two years. I shifted to Care-giving ministry in the beginning of 2006 till

come once a week for people infected with HIV.

How do you feel God has used you in your work?

What keeps you going?

To have faith in Jesus, seeing the difference in people's lives – that keeps

me going.

How can readers pray for you?

They can pray for me to get my own home and improvement in finance.

The Seed Of Hope has been serving the Bhekulwandle community in South Africa since 2003. We provide AIDS education, assistance to those who need HIV testing, care for the terminally ill, after school children's programs, vocational/business training, community education, Christian counseling and other social initiatives.

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