



**GIRLS  
& BOYS  
TOWN**

Helping youth S.H.I.N.E.® since 1958

# Youth TODAY

MAY 2020

A NEWSLETTER FOR SUPPORTERS OF GIRLS & BOYS TOWN



*Tracks the progress of 133  
Girls & Boys Town  
care-leavers over 6 years*

*How well do youngsters  
cope when they finally leave us?*

## Latest Growth Beyond the Town Report finalised

Following the fortunes of 133 young care-leavers over six years has been an immense but invaluable project. This was the focus of our Growth Beyond the Town research study, and it has rewarded us with the ability to identify the resilience variables that predict better outcomes for care-leavers as they transition out of care.

Participants in the study were interviewed as they disengaged from Girls & Boys Town South Africa (GBTSA), and we then documented their progress in follow-up interviews over the next five years.

We are now delighted to have finalised the GBTSA Quantitative Report 2019, presenting the most up to date findings of this ongoing Growth Beyond the Town research study.

A final draft of the report was recently approved by the CEO of GBTSA Lee Loynes and Professor Adrian van Breda, Head of Social Work, Faculty of Humanities at the University of Johannesburg. The research is a joint project of the two organisations.

Having vulnerable youth placed into therapeutic residential care reaps benefits for both the individuals involved and society, where

these findings are also shared with the field professionals during presentations biannually.

But there is no simple way to disengage adolescents when it is time for them to exit a care centre, leaving behind therapeutic shelter, nurturing, protection, food and skills.

A key finding is that our participants consistently scored higher than the global average, increasingly viewing themselves as stronger and more able to deal with life's challenges, and were less discouraged by failure.

Generally, participants had felt well prepared to leave GBTSA and optimistic about their futures, and many still feel that they can turn to GBTSA for advice and assistance.

Participants felt a strong sense of belonging in their communities, even though many raised concerns about safety and having to deal with the effects of, for example, substance abuse.

This social-ecological view of resilience means that the protective factors that are part of the GBTSA methodology can be put in place elsewhere, thereby compounding the positive effect on care-leavers and supporting them towards better outcomes as they transition from care and into independent living.

*To read more on the research study, visit: <https://www.girlsandboystown.org.za/portfolio-item/growth-beyond-the-town-a-longitudinal-study-on-youth-leaving-care/>*

### Our Vision

Youth, families and communities;  
South Africa's strength and future.

### Our Mission

Creating opportunities for youth to grow and develop into responsible citizens, able to contribute to family and community life in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, equality and solidarity with others.

### Benefits of a bequest to Girls & Boys Town

A bequest in a Will to Girls & Boys Town, a registered 'Public Benefit Organisation' in terms of Section 18A of the Income Tax Act (Act 58 of 1962) is deducted from the value of your estate, which may be subject to estate duty. Your bequest to Girls & Boys Town will consequently be entirely free from estate duty and will reduce the portion of your estate which is subject to Estate Duty.



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## Challenging Times

*Dear Valued Supporters,*

First and foremost, we pray for you, your loved ones and surrounding communities' safe keeping from any infections during the challenging presence of COVID-19.

The safekeeping of our youth, their families and our staff and families has preoccupied our planning and operations over these past months – and real accolades go to our entire national staff team for their flexibility, responsiveness and generosity of time and effort as we adjusted our practices daily to respond to this changing landscape.

As all of our national residential therapeutic campuses were identified to be 'Essential Services', we have had our full teams working 24/7 with all of our youth on their respective campuses during lockdown. Many of our support services staff have been working remotely, but have remained on full-time stand-by. Each campus has designated a cottage/unit to be used for quarantining any youth or staff who may have become infected during this period.

Ongoing education regarding the responsibility that we all have to ourselves and others regarding COVID-19 and the lockdown was intensified on all campuses with youth as part of their daily programme on campus. The GBTSA National Hotline Service has remained functional to the public and managed and operated remotely.

Fundraising over the past few months and during the national lockdown has been excessively challenging, with our budget deficit being a real concern. Our first and immediate concern, however, is the safety, protection and ongoing healing of our young people and the staff who commit their lives to this healing process. Our attention to intensive fundraising campaigns to mitigate the COVID-19 financial drain will follow once we are all again safely and able to operate optimally.

Thus, thank you sincerely for your ongoing support and care towards GBTSA, our special children and staff. Please take very special care of your own health and well-being – and may you, your families, loved ones and communities be blessed and safe through this period.

*Lee Loynes*

LEE LOYNES  
Chief Executive Officer

## LIFE AS A STORY

# “Pain and tears, joy and laughter”

*A researcher shares moments from a Growth Beyond the Town interview...*

Xolani is 19 years old and has been living with his two older sisters since he left Girls & Boys Town in 2016. He is now in Grade 11 at a local school.

He kind of knows me and trusts me after our first research interview meeting in 2017.

His story begins at a very young age - Mom and Dad both die and this small Zulu boy is placed into the foster care of a white English speaking family. When Xolani reaches 9 years of age they 'pass the ball' to a children's home. Two years later the children's home 'passes the ball' to Girls & Boys Town. Four years after that, Xolani returns to his somewhat broke Zulu family. Xolani's sister Nonhlanhla, aged 30, is now the matriarch in the original family home.



***“If one listens up close, the sharing in these interviews is emotionally rich - pain and tears, joy and laughter...”***

Early in our chat, Xolani acknowledges that he still has his 'testing of authority' behaviour, which might have been part of his 'ticket' into Girls & Boys Town in the first place. He admits that sometimes he “does not feel like going to school” – and it's then that elder sister Nonhlanhla patiently parents him about the importance of education.

I learn that he remains, nevertheless, a strong advocate of the Girls & Boys Town programme of helping youth-at-risk to learn and master at least basic social skills. He describes how his mindset towards people in his community has changed dramatically, and welcomes the fact that every greeting creates an opportunity for a new relationship. He says

that previously he “just didn't care about other people around him - like I was self-centred”.

And then – suddenly - I am face-to-face with a shocking experience...

Xolani tells me about being in a serious motor vehicle accident at the end of 2018. He was hospitalised. He tells me (and I am listening, thinking this is a post trauma stress reaction) that he believed that “nothing in life mattered anymore because we can die any time”.

When Xolani gets home from hospital, he goes into his room and locks the door and stays there for some days. He is trapped in his own dungeon of despair (I am reading this as the depression part of post trauma stress triggering a total meltdown).

His broken and disconnected childhood plays through his mind over and over. Tears are pouring - the pain of it all recalled. So painful that he's saying to himself that he wouldn't want anybody else to go through what he had been through.

And then his 'cousin/friend' Asanda starts visiting him and listening, and keeps Xolani from falling apart completely. And I am thinking to myself: Thanks God for Asanda's caring friendship, otherwise this episode could have ended in suicide.

I then ask: “Xolani - so when you recovered with Asanda's help and emerged from your locked bedroom-dungeon, what then?”

“I had to accept it,” he says. “The past is past - what did not kill me will make me stronger.” We both laugh.

I say to him: “So, you have lived that saying”.

### Now you can support us through MySchool

You can support Girls & Boys Town through the MySchool programme. If you do not have a MySchool/MyVillage/MyPlanet card yet, simply apply for your free card now and select Girls & Boys Town as your beneficiary. Once you start swiping your card, we will start receiving funds. Every swipe counts!  
**To get your card call the Client Service Centre on 0860 100 445 or email [cs@myschool.co.za](mailto:cs@myschool.co.za).**

You can find out more at  
[www.myschool.co.za/schools/](http://www.myschool.co.za/schools/)



### Know more about our bequest programme.

In response to enquiries from friends and donors, we have a bequest booklet available on our website, intended to be an easy-to-read guide for anyone who is interested in leaving a bequest to Girls & Boys Town.

By leaving a bequest to Girls & Boys Town, or ceding an endowment or insurance policy to us, you will ensure that we will always be here to keep on helping vulnerable young girls and boys for years to come ... empowering them to S.H.I.N.E.\*.

For more information on our Bequest programme and/ or to receive a copy of the brochure, please contact Gertrude Wilson on (011) 482 2655 or email her on [mailing@gbtown.org.za](mailto:mailing@gbtown.org.za).





## Capital Fundraising Campaign launched to fund essential scope of work

After 62 years of service, historic Tongaat campus needs rebuilding

Nuns of the Dominican Order laid the foundations of these grand buildings over a hundred years ago, and they've proudly given service to their occupants ever since.

For 62 of those years they've been our Tongaat campus – and a home of hope for many young boys, from all walks of life, who have been abused, abandoned, and who have experienced trauma in their lives.

But now a Capital Campaign has been launched to raise the funds and materials to rebuild the campus. At a function to launch the campaign, GBTSA CEO Lee Loynes explained:

“In recent years our old buildings have started to experience structural problems and have become unsafe due to the ageing foundations. As such, we are appealing to individuals and business to support us with building materials, financially, or with their expert construction services, to preserve and rebuild the campus and enable us to serve the future generations of youth in South Africa.”

Our greatest concern is to ensure that we are able to keep our fundraising for the children's daily needs separate from that of fundraising for the 'Tongaat Capital Campaign'. We desperately need funds to rebuild a safe haven for our youth, but appeal to all of our regular donors to also continue funding our daily needs of education, food, and therapy.



## Dylan battles, Dylan blossoms



“He did what he wanted, when he wanted,” recalls a teacher at one of our Learning Support Centres.

Lacking in social skills and with very low self-esteem, Dylan was the target of pranks – often getting hurt in the process.

“Dylan was very weak academically, and did not follow instructions or rules,” the teacher told us. Clearly, like many children in his situation, he was going

to need some clever nurturing. He was gradually introduced to a series of well managed classroom programmes. He started learning his alphabet and how to colour in. His writing improved. He also started trusting people.

“Dylan's most endearing quality is that he always speaks the truth,” his teacher notes. “When the boys checked in every morning, I would keep Dylan for last because he would tell me everything!” He was a shy little boy, but started to realise when people were using him and began to stand up for himself.

Dylan slowly started to blossom. Everything changed for him. As he began to respond positively to our interventions, his behaviour and ‘sense of self’ improved steadily to the point where he would sometimes be the only one who got the Friday privilege – which meant that he could watch a movie.

“In my opinion, Dylan made the most behavioural, academical and emotional improvement in 2019,” says his teacher. “I am so proud of him. He started in Grade 1 this year.”



## Launch of the online Youth Shine Insights

We hit the ground running in 2020, with the first edition of the online quarterly stakeholder newsletter that we hope will help to put Girls & Boys Town South Africa (GBTSA) at the forefront of youth development. In our first issue, we give you a glimpse inside GBTSA, featuring some outstanding research we have done in the field of youth care, share a day in the life of our hotline counsellor, unveil our biggest project yet (the rebuild of our Tongaat residence) and lots more.

Should you wish to also receive this online quarterly newsletter, please email: [mailing@gbtown.org.za](mailto:mailing@gbtown.org.za)





## WWE® LIVE star Bobby Lashley visits us

World star Bobby Lashley playfully demonstrates some of his wrestling moves during his visit to Girls & Boys Town in March.

World wrestling star Bobby Lashley visited South Africa in March ahead of the WWE® LIVE shows that are planned for later this year. His mission was to speak about his life as a WWE® superstar and his goals to inspire the youth of South Africa. GBTSA was amongst the organisations that have received this honour from WWE®, and a visit by the superstar himself. We welcomed the visit, and

are forever grateful for the supporters that always place our youth as a priority.

Lashley, a world famous wrestler of 6'3" (182cm) tall and weighing 273lbs (123kg) came across as hard-hitting and soft-spoken. In the midst of his talent tour, Lashley also announced that WWE® will hold their first-ever talent try out in South Africa. Our youth were captivated!

See Bobby Lashley's interview on his passion for youth: <https://youtu.be/eJ3QO4-NLNc>

Mr Anthony de Agrela, who was an alumnus at our Magaliesburg Youth Development Centre 39 years ago, was an honoured guest at a recent Oath Taking for our newly elected Peer Group System Council Body. Embracing the tradition of this occasion, Mr de Agrela reminded the leaders of their responsibilities and encouraged them to be role models to their peers. He further led the Oath Taking of the new youth Mayor.

The Ceremony took place early this year, with each Leader pledging an oath to serve the youth and be of assistance to staff and management. Family and friends joined to observe this occasion. One of our primary school boys, only 12 years of age, was our MC for the occasion - and did a splendid job!

Leadership is one of the programmes we offer at GBTSA to upskill youth, allowing

### 'Old Boy' returns to lead Oath Taking ceremony

them to demonstrate their people skills, equipping them to be ready for the real world, and learning to confidently serve others.



## Dinner to say



### "Well done!"

On the occasion of new youth leadership elected to take over at our Kagiso Youth Development Centre, the leadership body went out for dinner as acknowledgment and appreciation of the work done by the previous leader group. On the evening, the girls were great ambassadors for GBTSA, doing an excellent job of informing other patrons at the restaurant who wanted to know who they were and where they were from.

Our Youth Development Manager and teams have done well to maintain a very functional Peer Group System that has 'care' as its foundational value in serving other less skilled and more vulnerable youth than themselves.

BY ANY NAME, OUR GIRLS AND BOYS ARE REAL! But, as a measure of protecting their privacy, names are changed as a policy. We trust you'll understand. Thank you.