



**GIRLS
& BOYS
TOWN**

Healing Heartbroken Children

Youth TODAY

JUNE 2024

A NEWSLETTER FOR SUPPORTERS OF GIRLS & BOYS TOWN SA



“I’m okay!”

Care-leavers report positive trends in our latest **Growth Beyond the Town** study.

Key findings from the study underscore the pivotal role of resilience in shaping the trajectories of care-leavers as they navigate the challenges of transitioning out of our care.

We are thrilled to share with you the latest insights from the ongoing longitudinal study conducted jointly by Girls and Boys Town South Africa and the University of Johannesburg Department of Social Work.

The Growth Beyond the Town longitudinal research study, initiated in 2012, has been a cornerstone in our efforts to evaluate the outcomes and resilience of care-leavers transitioning into independent living. The report delves into various resilience variables across five overarching domains: relational, in-care, environmental, interactional and individual.

We extend our gratitude to all participants, stakeholders and supporters whose contributions have made this research possible. Together, we continue to make strides towards improving outcomes for care-leavers and building a brighter future for generations to come.

Key findings from the latest report:

- **Employment and education:** There is a positive trend in employment rates, with more participants finding work as they get older. Additionally, a significant portion of participants pursue education after leaving Girls and Boys Town SA.
- **Financial security:** The study shows a steady increase in participants achieving a liveable income and saving money.
- **Food security:** Food insecurity concerns decrease significantly over the seven years.
- **Substance use and crime:** The vast majority of participants remain free from drugs, alcohol and criminal activity throughout the study period.
- **Health and well-being:** Physical health improves over time, while psychological health remains stable. Overall, participants report feeling increasingly prepared to cope with challenges.
- **Positive GBTSA experience:** A high percentage of participants feel well-prepared for life after Girls and Boys Town SA and value their connection with our staff even after leaving care.

Our Vision

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

Our Mission

Our mission is to heal heartbroken children, restore hope and provide a safe environment for the children and youth in our care to heal and thrive.

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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(Act 71 of 1997)

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Registered as a Welfare Organisation
(Act 100 of 1978)



Childhood trauma, if not treated, impacts well into adulthood

To understand our children is to understand the impact of childhood trauma.

If not treated, this devastating circumstance has long-term impacts well into adulthood. Trauma, also referred to as ACE's – Adverse Childhood Experiences – defines a child's exposure to any fear evoking events. These may include:

- personal or witnessed violence or aggression.
- any form of abandonment experienced as fearful by the child.
- a life-threatening or dangerous experience.

Fear evoking events like these can vary in intensity, frequency and duration and can impact the child along the low to high-risk continuum.

For instance, a child may have only one fearful experience (frequency) which under normal circumstances would likely be low risk on the continuum, but if the one experience is highly fearful (e.g. witnessing the murder of a parent - intensity) then this would place the child on the very high-risk end of the continuum.

Adverse Childhood Experiences impact on children's daily lives:

- Reduces the ability to respond or learn or figure things out, which can result in problems in school.
- Increases difficulty in making friends and maintaining relationships.
- Lowers tolerance for stress, which can result in behaviours such as fighting, checking out, or defiance.
- Increases problems with learning and memory, which can be permanent.
- Increases stress hormones which affects the body's ability to fight infections.
- Toxic stress increases heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing which can cause lasting health problems.

The children whose stories are featured in this edition of Youth Today have all experienced some form, degree, duration and intensity of fear and trauma. With the help, skill, and support of our staff team – and yourselves as loyal and committed partners – we can lead them through their struggles and hand them the resilience they'll need on the road to healing.

Thank you so much for being with us.

Lee Loynes
LEE LOYNES
Chief Executive Officer



From trauma to triumph

How the collective interventions of our social work, child and youth care, and learning support teams are the keys to healing heartbroken children.

It is well known that trauma affects the functioning of the brain and sets up neural pathways of 'fight or flight' as a child's only protective options.

This is why Girls and Boys Town SA's Residential Multi-Disciplinary Team applies itself holistically to the developmental needs of each child placed with us. Many of these children have suffered excessive trauma, which adversely effects their accessibility to learning.

To start these trauma-affected youngsters on a path to positivity, our Learning Support Team assesses each youth prior to admission and at six-monthly intervals throughout their stay with us. These assessments are the basis for each child's Education Plan, addressing their special education needs. Intervention is planned, focused and one-on-one with each child.

And beyond this, our Learning Support Team also plays a pivotal role in inculcating a culture of learning and value-based education with all Girls and Boys Town SA youth. In 2023 the intervention plan of intensive academic input in the school holidays yielded positive results. Not only did results improve but youth also became more motivated to attend school, and fewer youth are engaging in "school refusal."

Encouraging results

Results of our Learning Support Team's focused

interventions with youth have been encouraging, and there was steady improvement throughout the year.

The matric cohort of 2023, did well:

- 4 of the 5 passed. One Tongaat youth achieved a Bachelor's Pass, and will be going into a Learnership in May, and he also acquired his Driver's Licence.
- A Kagiso Youth achieved a Diploma Pass and will be studying nursing.
- 2 of the 3 Magalies youths achieved Diploma passes and will be entering into Skills Courses, and the third will complete the 2 subjects he needs to complete the requirements.

The matric cohort for 2024 numbers 8 youths, 5 at Kagiso and 3 at Magaliesburg. More and more youth are motivated to complete their education and are inspired by the achievements of their peers who are seen not only as exemplary learners but also as leaders in the Girls and Boys Town SA community.

Youth are beginning to experience the positive effects of acquiring the skills to master literacy and numeracy... and all of these achievements are possible because of your donor partnership with us and our youth. Thank you.

"The more that you read, the more things you will know, the more that you learn, the more places you'll go." – Dr. Seuss

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.

You can find out more at 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 & 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.



Adam:

burning house, sees Mom attacked

His story...

Born to a single, teenaged Mom in a rural South African town, Adam's early years unfolded uncomfortably under the glare of social criticism and early hardships. A series of traumatic experiences included the lingering recollection of flames from a burnt-out house, and witnessing his mother's scarring at the hands of her boyfriend. Adam's struggles intensified, compounded by learning disabilities and aggressive behaviour, leading to his eventual expulsion from school. Desperate, his mother ultimately looked to a local child protection agency for help. Referred to Girls and Boys Town SA, Adam found solace and guidance and started on a journey of healing. Through therapy and support, he learns to channel his anger into understanding and compassion.

Progress...

Adam has embraced the daunting challenge of returning to school this year armed with newfound confidence and assured of specialised support. Surrounded by mentors and professionals who recognise his potential, Adam has recovered his inner resilience – a testament to the transformative power of love and community offered by Girls and Boys Town SA, and enabled by each of our much valued donors.

Tailulah:

orphaned early, suicide attempts

Her story...

Now an 18-year-old school girl in Grade 12, Tailulah has nursed feelings of hurt and disconnection for as long as she can remember. Removed from the care of her mentally ill mother at just 4 months, Tailulah has had to live with the knowledge that her own mom had threatened to harm her. Years in foster care also seemed only to intensify Tailulah's sense of emotional neglect, made worse by the fact that people caring for her described her as an 'abandoned child'. It was only much later, when old enough to understand, that she discovered she also had a brother and a younger sister. But this too was an unhappy discovery since she realised that she was the only one of the three children that had not been raised in the care of real family. Along the way, due the circumstances of her life and where she was living, Tailulah has made several suicide attempts using overdoses of pills, and displayed periods of bad behaviour, weight loss, anxiety and isolation. Even her brother and sister reaching out to her was declined, for fear that they too would ultimately reject her. Tailulah ultimately sought placement at Girls and Boys Town SA.

Progress...

Through Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Tailulah has learned to cope with trauma, express emotions, and challenge negative thoughts. Progress at Girls and Boys Town SA has included developing a sense of belonging, reconnecting with family during holidays, and assuming a leadership role, which boosted her confidence and communication skills.

Ndawo:

jailed Dad, unemployed Mom, violence

His story...

In his upbringing, 15-year old Ndawo has certainly faced challenges. His father was in and out of jail, while his mother was unemployed. Violence was pervasive in his household, with multiple physical fights witnessed from an early age, mostly between his mother and grandmother. Ndawo often hid during these incidents or sought help from neighbours. His mother later moved to her own place but continued to abuse Ndawo physically and neglect him for long periods. To cope, Ndawo turned to substances and aggressive behaviour, possibly influenced by his own history of abuse. His academic performance has suffered.

Progress...

With Ndawo's longing for his absent father and resentment towards his mother evident, social workers have provided individualised support to the family, focusing on improving parenting skills and addressing underlying issues contributing to Ndawo's behaviour. Other interventions are aimed at providing Ndawo with the support and skills he needs to overcome his traumatic upbringing and build a healthier future, and have included anger management and substance abuse programmes.

Prisha:

abused by family, then hijacked

Her story...

Growing up within a complex family and social structure, Prisha experienced repeated and significant emotional and psychological trauma. Ultimately, she was also physically abused by a sibling, leading to her admittance to Girls and Boys Town SA last year. Prisha settled in well with us, and a visit home in December was scheduled. The trip home, sadly, led to a harrowing hijacking incident – leaving Prisha traumatised all over again. We provided an immediate debriefing and ongoing trauma counselling, aiding her recovery from nightmares and flashbacks.

Progress...

While Prisha is slowly overcoming the hijacking trauma, the incident adds layers to her existing emotional wounds, necessitating comprehensive therapeutic intervention. Long-term support includes addressing the impact of past abuse through Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.

Addressing the trauma of abuse:
there's a special way
to reach every child.





HARVEST AT KAGISO!

Great savings for us – and a powerful message.



Rising proudly from the ground at our Kagiso Youth Development Centre west of Johannesburg is a fruitful partnership, one that started as a visionary project and has become a symbol of growth, opportunity and sustainable food sourcing.

The past weeks marked the culmination of months of hard work as harvesting season descended upon Kagiso. With bountiful yields of peppers and cabbages, the project has not only enriched the landscape but also promises significant savings for us by reducing reliance on store-bought vegetables for our kitchen needs.

Since its inception, our garden project has infused Girls and Boys Town SA's Kagiso Youth Development Centre with a tangible sense of positivity. Both staff and youth alike have embraced the initiative with unwavering enthusiasm.

Central to this success is the support from the Shoprite-Checkers CSI division in partnership with Food & Trees for Africa (FTFA) which recently bolstered the project by donating garden resources, training and installing three Jojo tanks – one 5000-litre tank generously donated by the Nelson Mandela Foundation alongside two additional 5000-litre tanks. These tanks serve as vital reservoirs, harnessing rainwater to irrigate the vegetable garden through a meticulously crafted irrigation system, also courtesy of FTFA.

What's flourishing here now at Girls and Boys Town SA's Youth Development Centre is the result of a partnership between Shoprite-Checkers CSI, their implementing partner FTFA and the Goodbye Malaria Trust South Africa. Our special acknowledgement goes to Shoprite-Checkers Group CSI for their generous back up in making this project a success.



Sharing with folk less fortunate than themselves



Getting dirty during flower-planting day



All set for the start of a big beach clean-up

Recent events, heartily celebrated.



Skills on display at boys' outdoor cooking contest



In the pink for Women's Day celebration



Happy result on our therapeutic art day