



**GIRLS
& BOYS
TOWN**

Healing Heartbroken Children

Youth TODAY

DECEMBER 2024

A NEWSLETTER FOR SUPPORTERS OF GIRLS AND BOYS TOWN SA



On the road!

Donors join hands to fund our critical school bus maintenance plan.

By this time last year, our national school bus fleet had reached a sad and dangerous state of disrepair. We had to act – urgently – and one of the key actions was to share our children's school bus plight with our loyal friends and donors.

You may recall that our pre-Christmas appeal last year explained the high but critical cost of maintaining our school buses. Response to that letter has indeed been generous, enabling us to put in place the proper routine to repair and maintain our ageing fleet.

We received donations to the sum of R300 547 and from January to October this year R331 994 has been spent to make sure that our school buses are in good condition, safe, and roadworthy. This ensures that vulnerable young learners continue to have access to adequate, quality education with daily transport to and from their respective schools across three provinces. It also helps us to place all our youth at the most suitable schools.

As Lee Loynes, CEO of Girls and Boys Town SA, notes: "The success of our Education and Tutoring Programmes which support projects at our Kagiso Development Centre in Krugersdorp and Magaliesburg Youth Development Centre are largely reliant on having sufficient transportation. Thank you for supporting us in ensuring that our school buses remain on the road transporting our children towards the education they deserve."

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 and Boys Town SA

A bequest in a Will to Girls and Boys Town SA, 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 and Boys Town SA will consequently be entirely free from estate duty and will reduce the portion of your estate which is subject to estate duty.

Follow us



National Hotline No. 0861 58 58 58
Private Bag X6, Greenside, 2034 South Africa
Tel. 011 482 2655 Fax. 011 482 6059 / 0866 131 580
E-mail mailing@gbtown.org.za
Website www.girlsandboystown.org.za
Registered as a Nonprofit Organisation
(Act 71 of 1997)
Registration No. 009-244 NPO
PBO: 130000379
Registered as a Welfare Organisation
(Act 100 of 1978)



Dear donors and friends

This is a newsletter that will bring pride to us all as we share the ‘where are they now’ UJ/Girls and Boys Town SA research findings and some success stories and journeys of our more recent Girls and Boys Town SA care-leavers. I am reminded of the Sandra Day O’Connor quote that “We don’t accomplish anything in this world alone ... and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one’s life and all the weavings of individual threads from one to another that creates something”. This brings into focus not only how well our youth have achieved despite their life challenges, but also how none of this would have been possible for them without ‘the weaving of individual threads’ from our dedicated staff, yourself as loyal and committed donor, our wise and supportive Board members and all those caring stakeholders who focused on making a difference for Girls and Boys Town SA and each of our young children – all for which we remain most grateful and blessed.

My role, as an ‘individual thread’, is also about to change as I officially retire on 31 October 2024. My 31-year journey with Girls and Boys Town SA has been a truly amazing one and I have appreciated each and every day - filled with joys, challenges and so many new and varied experiences and learnings that have all been significantly rewarding – and humbling. The Girls and Boys Town SA Board began the recruitment process for my successor in January 2024 and I am accordingly really pleased to be introducing Ms Karen Farred to you. She is currently the Head Residential Services nationally and has served Girls and Boys Town SA for 25 years. The Board, management team and I have the utmost confidence in Karen and her abilities, and she will ably assume the CEO role as of 1 November 2024.

I wish you all a truly heartfelt thanks, sincere appreciation and special blessings for all that you have done and for what has brought us all to this moment, ‘woven together’ through both the good and then also more challenging times – and for the many more special and successful moments and successes to come. Thank you for being such a significant part of the Girls and Boys Town SA family.

Wishing you all a very special, safe, family focused and blessed festive season.


LEE LOYNES
Chief Executive Officer

Where are they now?

Tracking the Journey of Girls and Boys Town’s Care-Leavers
Dr Lisa Dickens and Prof Adrian van Breda

Girls and Boys Town South Africa (GBTSA), in partnership with the Social Work and Community Development Department at the University of Johannesburg (UJ), embarked on a longitudinal study that tracks the outcomes of youth leaving care since the project’s inception in 2012. Over the years, this research has provided valuable insights into the post-care experiences of these young people. One of the key outcome areas is the critical issue of NEETs - youth who are Not in Employment, Education, or Training. The findings reveal both national and international trends, highlighting the alarming rates at which care-leavers fall into the NEET category and often remain there for prolonged periods. In South Africa in 2024, the general NEET rate for youth aged 15-24 years is 35.5% (Stats SA, 2024, p.9) with care-leavers

were classified as NEETs (Dickens & Van Breda, 2021). This is lower than both the national average and the rates observed in similar international contexts, such as in the United Kingdom, where more than a third of care-leavers remain NEET (41% of care-leavers between 19 – 21 years old). This compares to 12% of the general population in the UK (Harrison et al. 2024, p. 6).

The findings from the GBTSA study are important, particularly in the context of South Africa’s high youth unemployment rates, which are among the highest globally, with a 45.5% unemployment rate among youth (aged 15-34 years) (StatsSA, 2024). The success of GBTSA’s care-leavers, who are increasingly securing employment, continuing their education, and achieving financial independence, underscores the importance of

“... the Girls and Boys Town SA model serves as a beacon of hope, demonstrating that with the right support, care-leavers can thrive against the odds.”

typically facing even greater challenges, a reflection of the broader systemic issues contributing to youth unemployment in the country.

However, the outcomes for GBTSA care-leavers present a more encouraging narrative. The research shows that over time, there has been a modest downward trend in participants who are NEET. This means that the longer youth are out of care, the less likely they are to be NEET. This trend suggests that the support and interventions provided by GBTSA are equipping these youth with the resilience and skills needed to navigate the challenges of adulthood, and as they mature, they are more likely to be engaged in either work or studying. By the 7th year out of care, 27% of the cohort tracked in this study

comprehensive, tailored support during the critical transition out of care.

As the data reveals, these young people may be less susceptible to the NEET trap compared to their peers and build lives marked by stability and growth. This success story offers valuable lessons for policymakers and practitioners, illustrating how targeted interventions, mentorship, and ongoing support can alter the life trajectories of care-leavers. In a country grappling with the broader challenges of unemployment and economic disparity, the GBTSA model serves as a beacon of hope, demonstrating that with the right support, care-leavers can thrive against the odds.

References: Dickens, L. & Van Breda, A. (2023). Resilience and Outcomes of South African Girls and Boys Town Care-Leavers 11 Years On. Cape Town, RSA: University of Johannesburg and Girls & Boys Town South Africa.

Harrison, N., Dixon, J., Sanders-Ellis, D., Ward, J. & Asker, P. (2023) Care leavers’ transition into the labour market in England. <https://www.education.ox.ac.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2023/01/CareLeaversLabourMarket.pdf>

Statistics South Africa (Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2024:Q1). Quarterly Labour Force Survey: First Quarter 2024. South Africa: Pretoria



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/

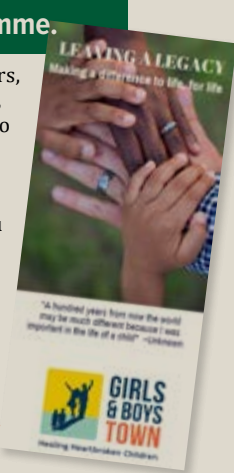


Know more about our bequest programme.

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.



LIFE *beyond* the TOWN

Tracking the progress of three young women as they happily face the challenges of life after leaving our care...

MARY

Mary was admitted to Girls and Boys Town in early 2022 following the breakdown of her foster placement.

She arrived with us carrying a real burden of behavioural issues... anti-social, depressive, withdrawn, and impulsive. Additionally, Mary had an attention deficit, a sexual identity problem, and a tendency to self-harm.

Family background

From birth, Mary had lived a nomadic lifestyle with her biological mother, isolated from extended family networks. Mom battled with alcohol addiction, mental health challenges, and would often threaten to self-harm during times of extreme emotion. As young as she was, Mary took on the role of confidant, assuming a parental role to see to her mother's needs, all of which sadly led to heightened friction.

Having been thrown out by her mother after one of these disagreements, Mary was taken in by a neighbouring family.

Despite the welcome offered by these caring folk and their keenness to legalise Mary's placement with them, Mary struggled to adjust. Her conflicts with several family members and her anti-social behaviour tested relationships. Struggling to manage Mary's self-harming on their own, the foster family sought mental health assessment for her with a private counsellor, hoping to avoid Mary's removal, but she was ultimately referred to us.

Admission at Girls and Boys Town SA

Upon her admission, Mary was assessed in the areas of emotional symptoms, conduct, peer group problems, and pro-social behaviour.

- Our social skills programme taught her how to communicate and show sensitivity to others.
- Therapeutic sessions with the social worker helped Mary accept the reality of her placement and the reasons for it, and to set her own therapeutic goals.
- Early sessions with Mary focused on increasing her ability to manage and use healthy coping skills to deal with difficult emotions.
- She was assisted to refine her safety plan and to establish a safety network in her new surroundings.
- Mary also benefited from a combination of external services and internal services in the care of our clinical team.

Where is Mary now?

Throughout her time with us, Mary's foster family continued to express their commitment to her and engaged a private counsellor to facilitate regular interaction. Mary was placed back into the family's care at the end of the year and – with the approval of her biological mother – they began the process of adopting her.

Mary continues to expand and explore the skills she learnt at Girls and Boys Town SA:

- She enjoys positive relationships within her foster family and peer group
- Her relationship with the foster family's youngest son, previously negative, continues to blossom into a positive relationship
- Mary actively takes part in recreational activities at school and has started a weekend job in the local community where she is required to interact with patrons.
- She has made remarkable progress with her mental health, particularly in overcoming self-harm, and has become a mentor to other teens who struggle with similar challenges
- Academically, Mary is also doing well. She takes Design as a subject, and her teacher frequently praises her work. She particularly enjoys Consumer Studies and often shares her skills with the family by baking or making dinner at home.
- Her overall grades have steadily improved, and she is aiming for a 60% average. Additionally, she participates in tug of war as an extra-curricular activity, a demanding sport that requires grit, perseverance, and teamwork, all of which she has demonstrated.

As Mary's foster mother says:

"Watching Mary grow into her own person is a beautiful experience. Raising teens is incredibly hard – eish, it really is – but she is also a joy to be with. I'm incredibly proud of the work she has done, and continues to do, to become the best version of herself."

JESSI

Jessi came to us with quite a list of referral issues: bullying, uncontrolled anger, and disrespect for adults.

Her previous habit of going missing from school continued once she joined Girls and Boys Town SA, often being absent from campus and her new school. It was clear that Jessi had no interest in our peer group system, which became a key challenge for us.

Working with Jessi's challenges

Being patient with Jessi allowed us to introduce her to the basic skills of life. Slowly, we saw real improvement in her ability to resist negative peer pressure, talk and positively interact with other youth, and control her anger.

A milestone in Jessi's behavioural improvement was reached when she began to advocate for other youth, showing sensitivity to others, and actively involving herself in problem-solving ideas with her peers.

A sad lapse in Jessi's progress occurred in December 2019 when she left the campus to go and stay with friend but, happily, in January 2020 she returned to Girls and Boys Town SA and asked for assistance.

Where is Jessi now?

After disengaging from Girls and Boys Town SA, Jessi went home to live with her grandmother, and our Learning Support Centre helped her find a new school and later make application to a college.

Since then, Jessi has found a job, and currently continues to work while furthering her studies.

SESI

Not attending school, disrespect for elders and authority, going out with friends and not returning home, and boyfriends... these were among the behavioural difficulties that saw Sesi referred to Girls and Boys Town SA.

Mastering key skills, maturing talents

Sesi had a long road of learning ahead of her, but we were fortunate to have her remain in our care for four years. During this time she mastered eight basic skills while acquiring the target skills to address the issues that brought her to Girls and Boys Town SA. She rose through the levels of the system to get to full achievement when she was in Grade 12.

Her behavioural improvement during this time was remarkable. Finally able to leave behind her anger at the world, she grew into a good role model for her peers. Her talents matured too – she became a very good communicator, expressing herself confidently, resisting negative peer pressure, and solving problems intelligently.

All of this saw Sesi eventually take on the responsibility of leading and running our Peer Group system.

Sesi disengaged from Girls and Boys Town SA and returned home in December 2018, having completed her matric.

Where is Sesi now?

Sesi is now permanently employed, but continues to study office administration, attending college online.



