

## Angel Starfish News

The Angel Starfish Educare Centre opened in August 2009 to provide affordable day care and pre-school education for children from disadvantaged backgrounds in Hout Bay, Cape Town, South Africa. The centre is situated in the Sijonga Phambeli Community Education Centre which is located on the edge of the Imizamo Yethu Township. The majority of the children attending the centre live in Imizamo Yethu.

The Angel Starfish Educare Centre has applied for recognition by the Provincial Government of the Western Cape as an Early Childhood Development service provider through the Social Services Branch and as a provider of the Grade R Pre-School Curriculum through the Education Department

The Angel Starfish Educare Centre has also applied for recognition as a Non Profit Organisation by the Department of Social Development.

The Angel Starfish Educare Centre is committed to providing the children attending the centre with the highest standards of education and care. The centre is governed by a Management Committee and is staffed by a Principle (Gladys Marange) and Care Assitants (Vuyiswa Mhlahlo and Zodwa Bobele).

## Management Committee

The Angel Starfish Educare Centre is governed by a Management Committee.

The following persons are members of the Management Committee:

- Michael Raggett, Chairman
- Norman Brook, Secretary
- Daniel Swanepoel, Treasurer
- Gladys Marange, Staff Representative
- Vuyiswa Mhlahlo, Staff Representative
- Xolile Nululu - Parent Representative
- Malcolm Coppin - Educational Adviser

## **Beginnings**

In 2000, Vuyiswa Mhlahlo, who is a Care Assistant at the Angel Starfish Educare Centre, started babysitting children to provide an income to support her own family. In a relatively short period of time the number of children she was caring for grew dramatically. Parents desperately needing to go out to find work would leave their children with Vuyiswa in the knowledge that they were being cared for in a safe caring environment.

Vuyiswa's child care provision was known as the Nolunthando Creche. It was located in a shack in Imizamo Yethu [Mandela Park] Township and had no running water, cooking facilities or facilities for the children to play.

In 2004 Vuyiswa met Gertrude Sgwentu who offered to help find support for the Nolunthando Creche. Gertrude was introduced to Elaine Mahoney, Headteacher of the Whiston Willis Primary School in England, who was attending attending an education conference in Cape Town in 2005.

Vuyiswa, Gertrude and Elaine agreed that the creche facilities were far from ideal for a children's creche and they started to look for alternative facilities. Initially they thought of acquiring a container and locating it in Imizamo Yethu. They involved local community leader Kenny Tokwe but soon learned that their was limited space available within the township.

Gertrude then offered space at her home which was located in Penzance a housing area adjacent to Imizamo Yethu and Elaine agreed to raise funds to support the creche on her return to the UK. The Sgwentu's double garage was converted into a classroom for the older children and a large Wendy House was built in the garden to house a second classroom for the younger children. Vuyiswa continued as a care provider and was joined by Zodwa Bobele.

Elaine Mahoney kept her promise to support the creche by establishing a UK Charity called the Angel Starfish Project and was soon sending out regular contributions for the creche in the form of funds, clothing and teaching resources.

## **Angel Starfish Creche**

When the creche relocated from Imizamo Yethu it was agreed to change its name. Elaine Mahoney suggested the "Starfish Creche" because she had met Desmond Tutu at the conference she attended in 2005. Archbishop Tutu told the story of the starfish, an old African

gentleman was walking along the shores of Africa painstakingly throwing back into the sea the hundreds of starfish that were washed up onto the shore. A young African boy saw what the old man was doing and mocked him telling him that he was wasting his time because there were hundreds of them and that it was too big a job. The old man took a step back from his work and replied, "But it matters very much to the ones that you throw back in".

When Elaine came to register the charity in the UK the Starfish name had already been used and Gertrude suggested putting the word Angel into the name. The "Angel Starfish" name was born. The UK charity taking the name "Angel Starfish Project" and the creche the name "Angel Starfish Creche".

## **Angel Starfish Educare Centre**

In 2008 the Social Services Branch of the Provincial Government of the Western Cape issued the Angel Starfish Creche with directions that it would have to move from the Sgwentu's home to a site zoned for community use. Social Services also provided advice on registering the crèche as a provider of Early Childhood Development services.

Kenny Tokwe on learning the the creche had to find a new home suggested to the management committee of the Sijonga Phambeli Community Learning Centre that they make facilities available to the creche. Malcolm Coppin, the centre's manager, agreed to include an educare facility in plans for a new building on the site. The intention being to develop the crèche from a pre-school care facility to a provider of early years development that included care and delivery of the Grade R pre-school curriculum.

In 2009 the crèche recruited a Principle Teacher. Gladys Marange, to oversee the crèche programme and ensure the Grade R curriculum was developed. The new building became available in August 2009, and with support from Elaine and Chris Mahoney of the UK based Angel Starfish Project, the children and staff moved in.

The new facilities which include a large classroom, office, kitchen, toilets and showers, have been kitted out with play and learning resources and is a far cry from the facilities of the original crèche. The

crèche was renamed the Angel Starfish Educare Centre in order to better reflect our aim providing an early childhood development service that includes both care and education.

On the 1st September 2009, management of the Angel Starfish Educare Centre was taken over by a management committee. The committee is working to ensure the long term viability of the centre and promoting the highest standards of child care, pre-school education and governance.

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