

# e'Pap Children's Feeding Project

## May 2013

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### 10 Years of Serving and being Blessed

Our project is ten years old. So this year is our first big anniversary. If this were a wedding anniversary, we would think back to the day of our wedding and relive those memories, we would reminisce about some of the major events and we would think about the people who had helped us on the journey. And that is exactly what we are going to do in this edition of our newsletter - tell the story of e'Pap Feeding from birth to age 10.

The story begins with Shelley and Lally facilitating and organizing a training course for about 30 pre-school teachers, through the Early Learning Centre in PE. During the fifth and last year, Shelley's husband Peter and Cathy Bath, who were both working at Hospice, became aware of a highly nutritious food called e'Pap. We thought that if it could feed HIV+ patients it could be a good thing for many of our undernourished children. Cathy Bath briefed us on the product and we bought a few bags to try out. We chose two pre-schools, one in Concordia (a big township just up the hill) and one in Rheenendal (a rural village outside of Knysna).



This was at the end of 2002. Traditionally the Christmas collection at Methodist churches is given to a children's charity, so we approached the leaders of the Knysna Methodist Church who readily agreed to support our Feeding Project in the year ahead. The journey had started.

After a few months Joan Huskisson, a retired head of Dietetics from UCT, heard about what we were doing and came to chat. She really grilled us. She encouraged us to establish the height and weight of the children so that we could monitor their progress. Beth Wilkinson, a local dietician, helped us with some guidelines.

On a very cold and rainy morning we set off to start measuring and weighing the children at Masizami. This little school was housed in a cold leaky shack but was headed by the dearest old lady Eveline Nquneka, who sadly has subsequently passed away. André Sandiford, President of Rotary came with us and as we started to undress the children we found that their clothes were soaking wet and many didn't have undies or socks. André a large man with an even bigger heart was almost reduced to tears. He went straight out later that day and bought beanies and socks for all the children.



After a few months it was evident that we were on an exciting journey. The health of the children had markedly improved. Anecdotal evidence in the improvement of their health was overwhelming - a great reduction in runny noses and sores on heads. We were encouraged and so moved up a gear.

Rotary were also encouraged and presented us with a cheque for R5000. We were ecstatic. Slowly more and more donors joined. Our journey was for real.

### Travelling companions

Then things got exciting. We had enough money to add more schools, but not enough hands and feet to deliver the e'Pap and monitor its usage. So Shelley stood up at church one morning and asked for some help. The response was overwhelming. Double the number of people needed volunteered.



This was the beginning of our volunteer model. Volunteers were put in pairs and introduced to a particular school for which they would be responsible. Partners in service.

The dream was to have a support team or person for each school, someone who would visit on a regular basis delivering and monitoring the usage of e'Pap, but also someone who would develop a relationship with the teachers and children. The teachers seemed to be isolated and were giving of themselves all the time, but they were not really adequately supported. This is a model which we follow to this day and it works like a charm. It develops relationships that benefit not only the school staff but also the volunteer. The world of a double blessing was “Going like a Boeing”.



The road then began to wind out of Knysna and into the forest. We went to the Diepwalle Forest station where there was a little group of children in an isolated area. Later we added other farm and rural children, including the delightful Rondevlei Primary School.



Our journey took us to our neighbouring towns. One of the most memorable was in an area called “Gatjie” in Sedgefield. “Gatjie” is an Afrikaans word meaning “hole”. It was literally a disused rubbish dump. This community was incredibly poor and the children simply roamed the streets. Reinet Barnes, who is a very community minded nurse, and her husband Dudley started feeding these children. At the beginning it was simply feeding a handful of children on the pavement. It ended with a brand new fully staffed preschool!

Our road also took us to Plettenberg Bay where Robyn Bath, assisted by the Plett Methodist Church established the feeding in that town. When Robyn had to move to Cape Town, Brian and Dawn van der Walt, staunch members of the Methodist Church, stepped in and the work there has flourished.



The pace picked up in the following years and we reached primary schools, places of care, a High School and gogos (township grannies) caring for just a handful of children. Thanks to Triens Bezuidenhout, we reached Oudtshoorn in the West and the Plett team extended the work to Storms River in the

East. Exciting stuff, but as in all journeys there have been hurdles too. From time to time we have had to stop feeding at certain schools for various reasons. Sadly the children suffer, but responsible use of the food products purchased by our donors' funds is a non negotiable.

But the growth continued, much of it because of funding from an exciting new initiative started in the UK. Close friends of the Godsells', Penny and Patrick Fleming, visited and learned about our feeding. They established the Garden Route Children's Trust which raises funds and channels donations from other UK donors to us, three times a year. They are currently our largest donor and partner and we are blessed by their generosity.



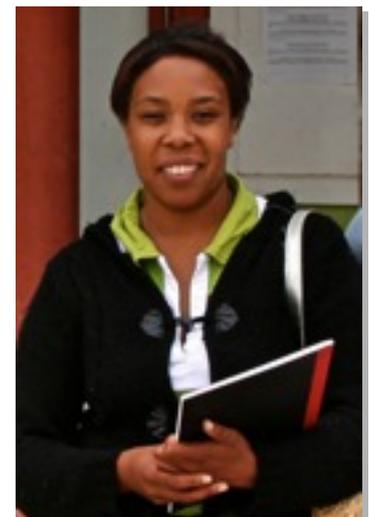
Most of our time and funds are dedicated to feeding, but our children and our schools also have other needs. Children need to develop their muscles and coordination. Thanks to the GRCT funding we were able to erect many Jungle Gyms at our schools.



Wendy Steyn became our Jungle Gym project person, managing the acquisition and installation of the outdoor equipment. There were many celebrations as new facilities were handed over, but probably the most memorable was at Buffelsnek. This is a forest station in the middle of the forest. It was mid winter and the children were told that they could not play on the equipment until the cement had set. All of them were up at 5am the following morning to play and experience the joy of something so new and exciting. It brought tears to one's eyes.

Classroom stationery such as paper, crayons and paint, were also in short supply at many of our schools and here too funding from the GRCT has been a boon. Over the years we have supplied much of this valuable equipment to many of our schools.

A third additional area of service is providing bursaries to assist trainee teachers to become qualified. To date we have assisted ten teachers improve their skills and in so doing improve the lives of the children they care for.



No journey is fun on one's own. This journey has never been a lonely one.



We have met the most wonderful people along the way. We started with just three of us, then slowly the numbers grew. Today we have 90 volunteers from all walks of life, all ages and all backgrounds. They form the backbone of the project. We have over 200 donors. Both groups are vital to our past and future success.

Other fellow travellers are of course our principals, teachers and cooks. They are our partners in service.

As one pictures this happy band of folk moving along the road, a vital component is the joyful, rowdy, energetic band of thousands of children happily singing “we love e’Pap, yummy yummy e’Pap”. The children simply worm their way into our hearts and it is very rare for any of us to come away from delivering our e’Pap and encountering the warmth and joy of the children, not to feel better for the interaction. Volunteers continually tell us, after spending time with the children at their school, that they feel happier about themselves, more positive about life in South Africa and simply more fully human.



No journey is successful without a guide. All along the way we have relied on God for inspiration, patience and wisdom and He has never let us down.



As we celebrate, we have a delightful mix of the people who have made this project the blessing it has been for the last decade. It is this diverse group of people who have been the key to success, the key to caring and the key to building the kind of relationships that make this world a better place. We thank God for each of you.

Bless you all



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