

SOBERING MESSAGE FROM LESS PRIVILEGED CHILDREN

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Article by Terrance M. Booysen

On the 16th of June this year, I had the distinct privilege of being invited to attend the open day of a registered non-profit home for children, aptly called C.H.A.N.C.E which is situated in Dunnottar, Springs.

For many South Africans, this day in our history is marked by the sad and brutal events that led to a youth, Hector Pieterse, being shot and killed by the previous government's apartheid police forces in Soweto, and which changed the course of South Africa's history. Indeed, Hector was not the only person that was killed on that fateful day.

As an invited guest to attend C.H.A.N.C.E's open day -- which coincided with what is now known as Youth Day -- the painful memories associated with Hector Pieterse of some thirty years ago, were at odds with the joyous occasion I was now experiencing with the young children who are cared for at C.H.A.N.C.E. It was sobering listening and watching these less privileged children, who provided their audience and potential donors a lively song and dance show, perhaps with many of them not knowing of the hundreds of other school children who had lost their lives in Soweto on 16 June 1976.



Children at C.H.A.N.C.E receive their Teddy Bears on Youth Day to brighten their day

With the events of what eventually lead South Africa to create a public holiday to honour the victims who were killed in this barbaric era of our country's history, I was saddened by the fact that there are still so many thousands of black children who have been let down by 'a system' which is meant to protect and nurture them.

In his key-note address, the chairman of C.H.A.N.C.E, Advocate Phillip Lehlohonolo Mokoena (SC) left the audience with no doubt that all children, but especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds need the nation to join hands and make a commitment to bringing change in their lives. What was especially profound in his message, was that children are just that; they're children and it is important to see them with smiles on their faces and that they have hope towards a brighter future. Adv. Mokoena (SC) correctly emphasised that these children must not be ostracized, and that it is our duty to ensure that they are accepted, and nurtured by our communities. He went on further to say that even though some donors may not have had money to assist the funding requirements of homes such as C.H.A.N.C.E, the business community and citizens should join hands to address this growing problem of parentless homes in South Africa. In cases where people could not donate their money, Adv. Mokoena (SC) said even people arriving at the home on a frequent basis, to read the children stories would go a long way to making the children feel special.

Whilst there may be a perception that people of the legal fraternity are somewhat 'cold' or 'distant', Adv. Mokoena (SC) is quite the opposite; this gentleman regards the ninety children of C.H.A.N.C.E as his own, and he reminded us that these children only dream of a swimming pool, and that they do not know the

meaning and significance of Mother's Day, Father's Day or even Christmas holidays and family bonding. His message is a serious awakening for the many people who take these matters for granted, and those who complain about the over-crowded shopping malls, or their insatiable desire for the latest technological gadgets and other societal trappings. The friends at C.H.A.N.C.E. and their care-givers are grounded on humble values which have meaning, and so their adage of love, support and understanding underpins the manner in which they are caring for these children in Springs.

Ironically, it was by chance that I met these beautiful children at C.H.A.N.C.E. As part of CGF Research Institute's ('CGF') efforts to assist impoverished communities, we try and sketch some of the information about various children-based NGOs and their basic requirements, in order that a prospective donor will include them as a new beneficiary.

In terms of raising awareness, our CSI (Corporate Social Investment) approach includes partnering with various NGOs to bolster the efforts of having a greater impact upon the poor. As a part of CGF's CSI programmes -- supported by Wot-If? Trust -- CGF seeks registered NPOs where impoverished children are involved. Through Wot-If? Trust, CGF is provided Teddy Bears which are a donation from Big Five Duty Free. Big Five Duty Free encourage travelers at all major South African Airports to buy the Teddy Bears and leave them behind in large bins and these are then donated to those less fortunate. As the batches of Teddy Bears are delivered to CGF, we then go in search for NPOs such as C.H.A.N.C.E with needy children, in order to add a little spark of joy to their day.

"Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine, that a child of a farmworker can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another."

Nelson Mandela (1918 - 2013)

Whilst the initial purpose of CGF is to deliver the Teddy Bears to the children, in reality we have a greater objective. So often, only the larger and more 'visible' NPOs -- who have structured marketing campaigns -- are recognised by the corporates, and these NPOs are usually the first to be assisted with various forms of financial aid. Expectedly, the smaller registered NPOs are generally overlooked, and it for this reason that CGF specifically targets this segment of NPOs. In doing this, through CGF's wide reach within the corporate and government communities, we encourage the donors to consider splitting their existing CSI investment monies amongst the smaller NPOs we have identified.

Some of C.H.A.N.C.E's challenges include:

- Transport to school and extra mural activities
- Assistance with homework in the afternoons
- Holiday / foster care
- Development of individual talents
- Job opportunities for school leaving children (as they have to be discharged at the age of 18 years and usually have no parents / friend / or relatives to go to)
- Security around the premises for the safety of the staff and children
- Entertainment during school holidays are also a challenge to keep them busy in a constructive manner
- Upgrades to the property

ENDS

Words: 1,371

About Wot-If? Trust

Wot-If? Trust operates primarily in Diepsloot, working on Socio-Economic and Enterprise Development Initiatives. Their focus is on helping emerging and small enterprises to grow and become sustainable and giving the youth hope and opportunities for the future. Agriculture, business, technology, innovation and media are key drivers, specifically on how these impact on improving lives and the Diepsloot community in general.

For further information, please contact: Gail Styger (Wot-If? Trust: Founder & Trustee) 083 625 3929 or email gail@wot-if.co.za

About C.H.A.N.C.E (NPO Nr: 012-931)

Established in 1996, C.H.A.N.C.E Children's Home is a non-profit organisation and an Article 21 registered company that develop and care for the welfare of abused, battered, and HIV children who have been placed in our care by the South African Children's Court.

Our primary purpose is to provide the children with clothing, housing, schooling, food security and stability. Additionally we aim to provide the children with the necessary therapy, life skills, love and emotional support that the children need to become responsible adults.

At C.H.A.N.C.E, we believe that child care is not just the provision of food and shelter, but also includes the provision of a special place for a child to be, a home in which they can take pride and feel surrounded by love and warmth. Every success is built on the ability to do better than good enough.

The late Trudy Howell was the founder and the Manager of C.H.A.N.C.E for 17 years. After she experienced some health issues, she passed away on 07th January 2014. Her late husband, Danny Howell, started the Home in Springs on 03 March 1996, having recognised the need to support children who have been abused, battered and abandoned. With the unexpected death of Mrs. Howell, the community was unsure of the future of C.H.A.N.C.E. Hereafter, the Children's Home became funded through government, but it is also heavily dependent on funding and goodwill donations from the community for its functioning.

For further information, please contact: Magda Reed on (011) 734-2319 or email chancehome@iburst.co.za

Further Media Information:

Terrance M. Booysen (CEO)
CGF Research Institute (Pty) Ltd
Office: (011) 476 82 64 / 1 / 0 Cell: 082 373 2249
Email: tbooysen@cgf.co.za
Twitter: @CGFResearch