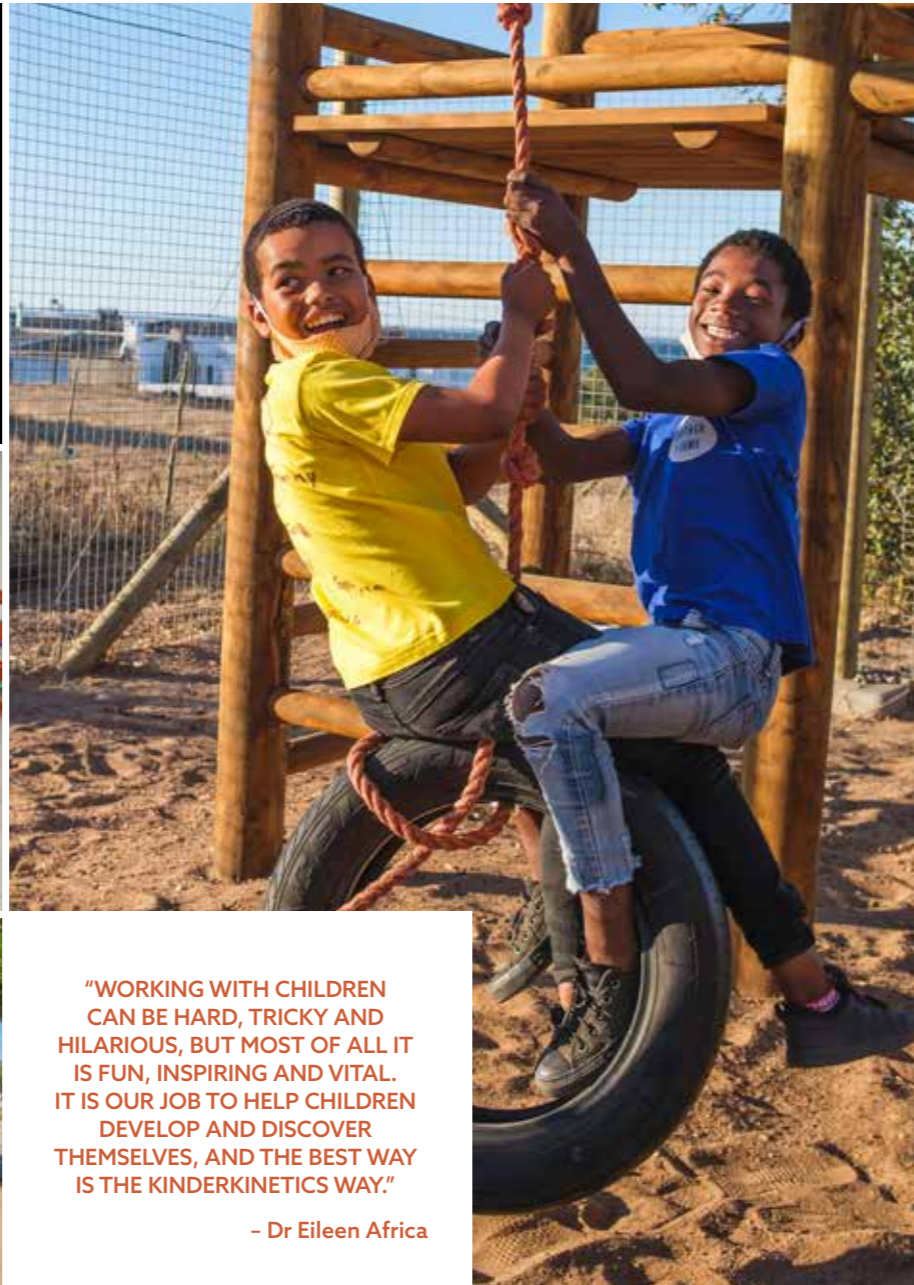


CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW: Dr Eileen Africa is one of the pioneers of Kinderkinetics in South Africa. She initiated the honours programme at Stellenbosch University and serves on the South African Professional Institute for Kinderkinetics; the joy on their faces tell the whole story! Paternoster youngsters give the Fitness Box a whirl; Kinderkinetics graduates Joné Marx (left) and Diané Ungerer find playful ways of making the children healthier and smarter in their life choices; they make good use of the wooden structures in this section of the Fitness Box.



"WORKING WITH CHILDREN CAN BE HARD, TRICKY AND HILARIOUS, BUT MOST OF ALL IT IS FUN, INSPIRING AND VITAL. IT IS OUR JOB TO HELP CHILDREN DEVELOP AND DISCOVER THEMSELVES, AND THE BEST WAY IS THE KINDERKINETICS WAY."

- Dr Eileen Africa



MULLER COETZEE; ADRIAN VENTER; SUPPLIED

PLAY WITH A PURPOSE

Stellenbosch University is helping the children of Paternoster to get a firm foothold on their future. Kinderkinetics is the key to that, writes JOAN KRUGER.

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY (SU) has found a new 'playground' in Paternoster, the quaint fishing village on the windswept West Coast. But on this playground play is regarded as work – as perhaps the most important work children can do.

For this is what Kinderkinetics is about: using movement to help children develop, physically and mentally, to the best of their abilities. The targeted exercises provide a leg-up for healthy development during those all-important formative years up to age 13. For children with developmental delays or disabilities, it offers a chance to catch up. On top of it, Kinderkinetics kindles a love for movement that will stay with children for the rest of their lives.

Two Kinderkinetics graduates, Diané Ungerer and Joné Marx, decided to do community service this year and joined the team of the Paternoster Project NPC. They are currently working at both the Educare Centre for pre-schoolers and at Hoopsig, the project's educational and life skills centre. In collaboration with Dr Eileen Africa, who initiated

the Kinderkinetics Honours programme at SU, they are creating a special physical activity programme for the children of Paternoster.

"Working with children has many facets; it can be hard, it can be tricky, it can be hilarious, it can be oh-so-many things, but most of all it is fun, inspiring and vital. It is our job to help children develop and discover themselves, and the best way is the Kinderkinetics way, by learning through movement," Dr Africa says.

Paternoster's inviting beaches may be off limits for the moment, but to compensate for that, there is the newly constructed, state-of-the-art Fitness Box, the brainchild of Dagmar Freitag, a member of the German federal government. This sophisticated parcours, known locally as the Fiksboкс, is a kind of obstacle course that puts the fun into fitness. Wooden structures invite little ones to leopard crawl, clamber, dangle, balance and swing to develop their gross motor skills. For the rest of the community there's an outdoor gym with colourful galvanised steel equipment.

While watching the eagerness with which the children tackle their exercises in the open air, Diané takes a moment to reflect: "I love what small communities have to offer. Since they are more likely to be overlooked, it makes the experience all the more special. The obstacles that arose in the wake of the pandemic pushed all of us to find new ways to realise the potential and dreams of the children we are working with." Diané herself is from the West Coast and future plans include establishing her own Kinderkinetics practice in one of its towns.

Even before then, other schools in the Saldanha Bay Municipality will benefit from the expertise of the Kinderkinetics practitioners. Plans are already afoot to invite teachers and learners to workshops at Hoopsig, says Shemoné Bokhary, Hoopsig's programme manager.

There are many layers to Kinderkinetics sessions

and to the explosion of youthful energy. To the untrained eye, it may be just a merry-playground of multicoloured hoops and cones and balls, but all activities are underpinned by solid neurological science. In addition, themes and storylines are used to make the exercises an all-encompassing experience for the children.

For Joné from KwaZulu-Natal, village life

on the West Coast has been a fascinating experience. “To work in a small, intimate community is especially rewarding as our efforts affect everyday village life, whether through training sessions with the children or in small interactions walking down the streets of Paternoster.

“We are a project for the community and within the community.” **V**

KINDERKINETICS IN A NUTSHELL

Kinderkinetics uses physical activity to promote the holistic development, physical as well as academic, of children between the ages of 0–13 years. Practitioners usually start off by evaluating children’s gross and sensory-motor skills before exercises are developed to help them achieve specific goals. Each session is designed to let children have as much fun as possible and to love physical activities for the rest of their lives. Kinderkinetics aims to promote the growth and development of all children and can be used in rehabilitation programmes as well for children with growth or developmental delays or disabilities. For more information about Kinderkinetics as a highly specialised honours programme in the Department of Sport Science, please go to: <https://wakerakker.wixsite.com/kinderkinetics>

“
IT FILLS ME WITH PRIDE AND GREAT JOY TO SEE HOW ALL WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE THE BEST POSSIBLE USE OF THE FITNESS BOX.
 ”

– CHRISTIAN NEUBER

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: The Fitness Box is a colourful invitation to a healthy body; This is how you do it! Students from the Department of Sport Science at Stellenbosch University demonstrate the skills needed to execute the exercises perfectly.

The Paternoster Project NPC supports primary school learners in and around Paternoster with professional tuition and life skills. Our children deserve a fair chance in life. If you would like to join as a friend, please call Alrika (084 661 7953), Shemoné (073 395 8341) or Joan (083 556 1913). For more information on the Paternoster Project NPC, go to paternosterproject.co.za/



ABOVE: Professor Elmarie Terblanche of the Department of Sport Science at Stellenbosch University designed the equipment and developed exercises for the Fitness Box.

A flying start

The link-up between the Sport Science Department at Stellenbosch University (SU) and the community of Paternoster came all the way via Germany. German parliamentarian Dagmar Freitag, who firmly believes sport has the power to change the world by inspiring and uniting people, brought together Professor Elmarie Terblanche of Sport Science and Christian Neuber, founder of Kinder fördern Zukunft stiften and the Paternoster Project NPC.

Since 2018, the Department of Sport

Science has been involved with the children and the community of Paternoster. When offered the opportunity at the annual international conference organised by the foundation to add Kinderkinetics to the project’s programme, director Maïke Reinhardt jumped at the opportunity. The following year Nicky de Villiers, an SU Kinderkinetics graduate, joined the team of volunteers in Paternoster and started putting the youngsters through their paces.

Since then a solid partnership has developed between Sport Science at SU and the Paternoster Project NPC. This formidable team has already organised a training camp for Paternoster’s rugby club and has run various other sports events with children and adults. Professor Terblanche guided the design of the Fitness Box equipment. At the opening of the Fitness Box on 20 November 2020, students and faculty members explained and demonstrated routines to guests. “This is where my six-pack will be born,” one of them remarked,

with steely determination in his voice.

The Fitness Box, actively supported by Dagmar Freitag, was co-sponsored by Christian’s foundation and the German Government. In a message read at the opening ceremony, the German Consul General to Cape Town, Matthias Hansen, said: “Germany takes a vital interest in the sustainability and long-term success of South Africa as a role model of a diverse and free society, based on democracy and the rule of law. This success depends on the inclusion and active participation of the

country’s youth from an early age, on good education, and on the promotion of life opportunities. We sincerely and wholeheartedly want to see the project ‘fly’.”

“I see the Fitness Box as another important cornerstone that we have laid in Paternoster for the sustainable and healthy development of children,” Christian said. “It fills me with pride and great joy to see how committed everyone is, and above all, how all work together to make the best possible use of the Fitness Box.”