



Caro Zobel, a volunteer, with Audriek Snyders (left) and Roewaan Kruger from Paternoster.



Volunteer Hana Eder from Germany, practising yoga with the children.

Paternoster Project treasures development of children

PATERNOSTER - When German university student, Caro Zobel, arrived in the windswept seaside town to begin her volunteer role with a children's non-profit organisation, she thought she'd be the one teaching. Fast forward nearly 15 months, and Caro says she's learnt far more from the heritage-rich West Coast community than she could have anticipated.

Undoubtedly, the children she teaches have also made huge strides, Caro admits – their reading, English and Afrikaans language skills, and overall health and development have all seen significant improvements since the Paternoster Project NPC began running its after-school life skills programmes in 2016.

The project works with about 250 children aged 4-15 from the local Educare Centre and St Augustine's Primary School. They give the children daily hot meals; hands-on gardening lessons; 'Story Hook' sessions that encourage them to cultivate a love of reading; themed holiday clubs; ambitious building projects; and expert-led parenting seminars.

"We see great potential in every child, regardless of their social circumstances," explains Project Manager Maïke Reinhardt. The project aims to give the children a sound foundation for a healthy and fulfilling life, while also ensuring the local heritage of this charming fishing village is not only preserved but treasured.

Programmes run throughout the year with the help of German and South African stakeholders, with financial backing from the Ger-

man Foundation, Stiftung fördern – Zukunft stiften and its founder, Christian Neuber.

Qualified, short- and long-term volunteers, the so-called 'Orange Jackets' from the Universities of Baden-Württemberg, Germany, and Stellenbosch bolster these efforts. They specialise in education, early childhood development, kinderkinetics, theatre, coaching and youth work.

Last year the Paternoster Project NPC's landmark volunteer house was completed, their commitment to long-term, sustainable progress. The house envisioned as a social meeting hub, will be used as hostel, coffee shop and conference venue.

Stepping inside Hope View (Hoopsig), one immediately sees and hears traces of children everywhere: backpacks on hook-lined walls, colourful handprints and murals from floor to ceiling, and squeals of delight as they chase each other through a fishing-themed playground.

The after-school programme has become a daily highlight. Here, learners connect with friends, have a safe space to 'be themselves', and see positive role models among local and international volunteers.

Play is an integral part of the learning process with volunteers leading in song and dance; technical Lego challenges, front-yard soccer and rugby matches.

"Every sign of engagement is a success," says Paternoster-native Dustin Coraizen, who teaches in Stellenbosch, but often come back to support to the volunteers.

Dustin knows the struggle to 'make it' in a community with few jobs. He's currently

doing his masters' degree through Stellenbosch University and trying to show Paternoster's youth what's possible if they believe in their potential.

To get involved, donate, volunteer, or keep up to date with the Paternoster Project NPC visit www.paternosterproject.co.za for more information.

Written by Rebekah Funk.



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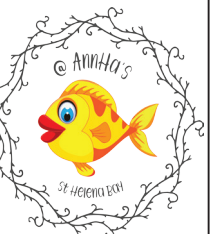


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