

# DAYS PRING CHILDREN'S VILLAGE

An Association Incorporated under Section 21. A not for profit Company (Reg.nr.2005/020126/08)

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## Newsletter for Dayspring Children's Village August 2020

Greetings from cold and frosty South Africa!

It is hard to believe it has been 4 months since my last newsletter. So much has been happening and it has kept us hoppin!! SA's level 5 lockdown reduced to level 4 in May then to level 3 in June and not because the infection rates were reducing but merely because they needed to get people back to work and providing for their families. There was a huge debate (as it has been in the rest of the world) as to whether or not to allow children back to school amidst rising infection rates. The reality of online learning in any format for most of the population of SA, is unrealistic.

The decision was then taken to slowly ease grades back into schools. The education department issued hundreds of pages of protocols, information, and new regulations and ... that schools needed to follow to the T or else they would be shut down. It required days of 'deep cleaning' the school and finding space in our already packed storerooms to move all 'excess' class furniture, toys, teaching materials... Basically every class now consists of kids desks, chairs and a white board for the teacher. We had to remove beds for the dorms in order to comply with the 1.5m spacing required by law. This also means we could only accommodate 30 kids at a time so we rotate, in a 3 week cycle, 3 to 4 grades a week.

That means a child will board at the school for a week and then be given 2 weeks worth of homework to do. It has been extremely challenging for the kids but also for the teachers, because in one week they need to mark and revise the homework from the past 2 weeks, then teach enough content for the child to understand and do work at home for the next 2 weeks!

One good thing that has come out of this time is that Dayspring has NEVER been so clean. Classes are sanitised every hour and 'deep cleaned' each day; the same with the dorms. The toilets are sanitised and/or cleaned 6 times a day. Elijah and I are part of the daily toilet sanitising crew and he mentioned to me the other day that the school toilets were cleaner than our house.. which is sadly true!! Each Friday we have to do a complete shake down and clean of the property to prepare for the next

group of children; mattresses, beds, desks, chairs are all scrubbed..

The Government requires everyone to wear a face mask and keep social distancing at all times and that includes schools. That means we spend a lot of time constantly reminding, especially our little ones, to pull up or put on their masks, to wash hands for 20 seconds, to not stand next to, touch, jump on... their neighbour/friends.. with all this said and done we praise God that He has kept all of us COVID negative! Truly it is walking in His divine healing protection because so many schools get shut down regularly due to COVID positive cases. We believe God calls us to do our due diligence and He covers our gaps.

Our staff has been AMAZING!! Everyone has jumped in to help clean, watch over the children during 'free time/play' (which sadly there is little of), while they are eating, and so on. Everyone is willing to clean a class, or dorm, or room... Staff come back on the weeks they are actually not teaching to help oversee and clean. We would never have managed without their incredible heart and willingness to go the extra mile.

During lockdown we had 6 orphans staying with us at the Vulnerable childrens home. 3 of them are still schooling with us but their aunt and we felt it was best for them to stay with us. It relieved the financial stress and burden on her trying to find money to feed them and we also LOVE having them stay with us. The other 3 orphans have all lived and attended school at Dayspring from kindergarten to Grade 9 but 2 are now at College and one is doing her Grade 12 and is staying with her sister who lives closer to her high school. They wanted to spend lockdown at 'home' where they felt the most secure. It was absolutely wonderful having them as well as some of the other staff children around for a few months. We had lots of crazy filled games of croquet and awesome games around a bonfire. We put on a feast and fabulous party for Buyane's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday party. Considering at that time, it was illegal to go out of your house without a valid reason, any form of gathering together was prohibited, we were able to have a really wonderful, special party for him, because there was close to 25

of us that were ‘locked down’ together on Dayspring farm .

This quality time with our ‘kids’ has really helped to settle them in their struggles to understand where they belong (as they are orphans), and who will really care about them and care for them.. The time together has allowed us to reassure them that they are and always will be part of our family, and we will always love and care for them.

We also had numerous opportunities, as the Dayspring family, to pray together. We came together several evenings a week to worship Jesus and share the Word of God together. It was a time to quiet ourselves before the Lord and spend enriching valuable time studying and meditating on God’s incredible Word (bible). We all grew in our faith and love of Jesus in that time.

So amidst all the extra craziness of COVID and running a COVID compliant boarding school, the Rotary in Rustenburg decided it was finally time to start building the 2 toilet blocks and sewerage that has been in the process for over 10 years. I was super happy to actually finally get the toilets built but kept asking God are you sure this is your timing?? Our plans were passed last December, so we thought at least by January we could have got started.

One day when our management was spending the day fasting and praying, God dropped in my heart the reason for NOW being His perfect timing. For our 7 builders (who all love Jesus), God was providing income during a very difficult global economic crash! He was revealing Himself to each of them as their Divine Provider despite whatever was happening in the world around them. 4 of the builders are young men who didn’t even have jobs before COVID; they are part of the Rotary Global grant that requires us to upskill previously unemployed youth. So not only are they getting money to feed their families, during vast unemployment, they are learning a skill that they can take with them when the economy improves. GOD IS ALWAYS faithful even when we don’t understand it!

Building during this time has its added challenges as some building stores won’t deliver to us at the moment, or they don’t have stock (one day it took 4 building stores and 2 hours to find ‘fish line’ which the brick layers use to build in a straight line)! But God is good, He has made a way for us in everything we have needed. One store that we have bought the majority of our material from has a young man working there that I mainly deal with in terms of ordering, quotes etc. I call him my ‘first son’ (Jafta) because he was at Dayspring when I

arrived and Charles gave him to me to teach him fractions. Charles said had tried everything he could to get Jafta to understand but by then he had a ‘blockage’ to learning math.. He just kept saying, it is just too hard, I can’t get this... So I bribed him with Archie comics according to how well he did on his assessments! Now he works out the amount of material I need in square meters and puts together my quotes! Perseverance, with God’s intervention, always produces fruit!

SOoo basically our days are overflowing with cleaning, assisting in the dining area, overseeing social distancing and mask wearing with the kids, refilling cleaning/sanitising material, ensuring everyone else is also being diligent in their responsibilities and doing admin when there’s a spare moment!

We have had to increase our budget in terms of the amount we spend on our cleaning supplies as well as paying the older staff kids (who are still staying with us because of COVID) for assisting with cleaning. Our existing staff does not have enough time clean to the level that is required by the Government. Our 3 orphans, who have been with us since lockdown, have also jumped in and been a tremendous help in terms of being room leaders in hostels where little ones now ‘sleep alone’ because we needed to spread the 30 children who board each week amongst our 6 hostels. They assist in the dining area and also have learned the value of diligence and hard work when given tasks to do. We honestly don’t know what we would have done without them during this time and are so proud of the beautiful young people they are growing into. They each have their own goal for what they are saving money for and they are also learning how to manage their money.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support us in prayer and finances. We are so grateful for each one of you and want you to know that God takes what you give and multiplies it 100 fold. You are being God’s hands and feet for these amazing vulnerable children as you enable us to keep serving them here in Africa. Thank you for the depths of our heart and may God continue to ‘woo’ each of you deeper into a personal journey and relationship with Him. As the media and circumstances all around us want us to live in fear and trepidation about our future, let us hold more tightly to our amazing Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He suffered tremendously while he was fully man on earth in order for us to access eternal life and peace in this life.

Blessings, Elijah and Kim Katuta and the family of Dayspring Children’s Village