
ECONOMIC SLUMP VS SOCIAL SUFFERING (Newsletter 2011)
PUBLIC SCHOOLING – (fast becoming) PUBLIC ENEMY NO # (Newsletter 2012)
CHAOS MUST LEAD TO CONTEMPLATION, TO CONSULTATION AND FINALLY TO ORDER (Newsletter 2013)
EXPRESSIONS OF “I AM” AN ASPIRANT STUDENT, A VALUED EMPLOYEE, A RESPECTED CITIZEN, AN EQUAL HUMAN BEING IS EVIDENCED “FAR AND WIDE”
(Newsletter 2014)
ONE YEAR AND A BIT LATER AND EXPRESSIONS OF “I AM, THIS IS MY VALUE, CAN YOU HEAR ME - DO YOU EVEN SEE ME” CONTINUES. THOSE THAT
LOOK ON MUST ASK THEMSELVES: “WHAT ARE THE FILTERS THAT SHAPES MY EXPERIENCE OF THIS DRAMA CALLED LIFE?” (Newsletter 2015)

NEWSLETTER – NOVEMBER 2016

WHAT SAY YE ...

What is happening, what is going on in this country - in this world, for that matter? Is this question, this almost constant background wondering, not also in the forefront of your mind? In fact, one has just to look to the “themes” of past newsletter (all the way back to 2011) to realise that the seemingly random chaos we are experiencing now in this country has been slowly brewing over a rather long period. Because we all live, day to day “on auto pilot and engaged only in our own little bubble of existence”, we’ve become desensitised to it all, hoping it will resolve itself. We can ofcourse continue navigating through life in this way, but operating in “auto pilot mode” is only effective when folk are kept in check and things are on track. What happens when unforeseen events make itself known, such as we are experiencing now: unusual weather patterns, corrupt leaders, failing economies, increasing violence, striking workers, student uprisings. Gone are the days of packing up and going for greener pastures, for is it not so that similar troubles are being experienced in those greener pastures. As individuals, we are concerned for our lives, our children, our possessions, our futures - but so too is our fellow man. And it is this concern that is highlighting the societal divide that has led to our “collective mess” outplaying itself now. So, we really only have one of two choices: Hope and pray it all goes away OR join hands, heads and hearts and work towards renewal. It is not an easy task, yet it is not an impossible task.



This organisation is one such example of “what can be, when we invest in others to be”

A vast majority of our bursars come from impoverished backgrounds and find themselves in environments where most other individuals would awaken each morn and be aware that even that they are still breathing is, on the one hand “an act of labour (to bemoan) and on the other, a miracle (for which to give thanks)”. During the September school break, I facilitated at a week long Maths Tutorship programme in an area where the learners, on one occasion, had to walk past dead bodies of gangsters killed during the night – bodies that the police had not yet collected. Can you even begin to imagine that – walking past dead bodies, as if it is the most normal thing in the world. Yet you have to be vigilant and very aware of fellow gangsters now possibly out to seek revenge. All this in order to attend extra classes, because your desire to lift yourself from these circumstances is so strong. Thank you Gaussian Engineering, for sponsoring the cost of the catering and Maths Tutor– for investing in these youngster’s futures, without *demanding* specific measurables – for having nothing but their very best interest at heart.

Phillippi is another such poverty stricken, gangster ridden area, yet we can proudly hold up three of our grade 12 learners from schools in this very area, that each successfully secured a full Tertiary Tuition Scholarship from the Yvonne Parfitt Trust. They are Lindelwa Matshoba (Sophumelela High School); Khanya Xhongo (Intesbenziswano High School) and Njongo Tyatyaza (Phandulwazi High School). We are exceptionally proud of these learners, given that they were up against fellow learners from better resourced and also learners from the top private schools in the Western Cape. It was wonderful to receive a call from the Chairperson of the Yvonne Parfitt Trust exclaiming that it was the first time, in the history of their existence (bearing in mind that they have been around since 1957), that they have awarded Scholarships to three nominees put forward from one institution (in this case, the ASF).

What of those that “can be, but are denied that opportunity to be”:

There is much uncertainty currently in the educational space. We cannot ignore it – it has a direct impact on the futures of our bursars, and it informs the donor’s continued support of organisations, such as the ASF, working in this sector. In fact, the student uprising [focused in the arena of tertiary, post school education] underscores the importance of an organisation such as the ASF. Our core function being that of motivating and providing the means for our high school learners to complete their basic education – to value themselves – to value and acknowledge the importance of their education. To take full responsibility for “who I am, where I want to be and how I aim to get there, not forgetting those that helped me on my journey, remembering where my journey started and having the necessary empathy for those still on such a journey”.

The pressure on especially our young matriculants is immense. They have to prepare for their final exams under the most harrowing of circumstances (violence, death, disruptions of all sorts all around them) and in that moment of having successfully overcome, they are now faced with the added uncertainty of “I have successfully completed my high school career – I have worked really hard and done well. But what now – the institutions of higher learning are in turmoil...”. This too, is where the ASF will need to further step up – for a highly motivated individual who stands with the key to his/her success (matric certificate), but is denied access, is left disillusioned and can very quickly lose complete faith. One who has limited life experience - yet sees the door leading to that experience being shut, becomes angry, irresponsible, unreasonable and resentful.

This current air of uncertainty weighs heavily on every matriculant and yes, they are soon to be our “past” bursars, but so too they are the future of this country. We need to keep the fire, the motivation, the desire, that we have been fuelling throughout their high school career, at a high intensity. And for this, we need and appeal for your continued support.

LET US TAKE A QUICK OVERVIEW ON THE YEAR THAT WAS:

Staff: if anything, this year certainly highlighted the fact that we are operating with a staff compliment that cannot maintain this level of commitment indefinitely. We are 4 full time employees, plus a colleague that works half days. We annually administer to the needs of 2200+ learners at high school level and 60+ at TVET college level. Then we also take great care in nurturing our relationship with donors and engaging with numerous partners who are more directly involved in the work of this Fund. This year has seen every staff member take work home, even over weekends, in order to get through the workload and although we are totally committed to this work, this kind of intensity cannot be sustained. Four years ago, we lost a staff member that was never replaced and as much as we are committed to keeping running costs at a bare minimum – it is now necessary to reconsider.

PARTNERSHIPS: Our 2016 / 2017 Annual report will be more detailed - below follows a summary:

Asset Trust: We provided additional finance to 117 grade 11 & 12 bursars (Masibambane & Bloekombos High Schools) that enabled them to attend the Summer/Winter schools (this programme runs in the Western Cape only).

Bike Town: 100 bikes were donated to ASF learners in the Atlantis and Ceres areas (Western Cape).

Catalyst Fund Managers: Provided funding for 500 stationery sets to distribute to ASF bursars.

Gaussian Engineering: Provided financial support for 30 bursars, facilitated a grade 11 Career Guidance Workshop and funded a Grade 11 & Grade 12 September Holiday Maths Programme.

Groote Schuur Primary School: The ASF served as one of two external adjudicators on their panel to select a current grade 6 learner who is to receive the Anton Meyer Scholarship award to go towards completing his/her upcoming grade 7 year at GSPS.

Nelson Mandela Metropole: Annually provides funding towards our TVET College Students in the Eastern Cape.

Parmalat SA: TVET college bursars graduating are presented with the opportunity of employment at their Western and Eastern Cape Depots.

PathCare: Committed to funding a Mathematics educator for a period of 5 years starting in 2017 (Chris Hani High School – Western Cape).

SA Travel & Tourism College: Full sponsorship of a year long training programme [valued at over R50k] that presents qualifying grade 12 female learners with an internationally accredited Hospitality qualification. This year, two of our bursars were accepted onto the programme.

UCT Interns: This year the ASF again hosted 3 Interns (Development Studies – Theory & Practice) for a period of just under 3 months.

VW South Africa – Uitenhage: This partnership presents an opportunity to our Engineering and Business Studies TVET graduates, who meet the VW criteria, to partake in their 3-year learnership programme.

Yvonne Parfitt Trust: We are annually invited to nominate one ASF bursar. This year we had three exceptional bursars that we put forward.

ASF BURSARS – Special Awards:

Mary Livingstone (English Essay competition): 74 essays from 13 schools were received. Adjudicators were encouraged by the standard of the better essays and noted several promising writers to whom they have written special letters of encouragement. Prize winners are as follows:

- a. 2 x Gold (St James in Eastern Cape & Portland High in Mitchells Plain)
- b. 3 x Silver (Portland High in Mitchells Plain, JS Skenjana SSS in Eastern Cape & Sarepta SSS in Kuilsriver)
- c. 2 x Bronze (Portland High in Mitchells Plain & Hector Petersen SS in Kraaifontein)

Mears Merit award (top three gr10 learners – WCape): This year's winner hailed from Steenberg High School 2nd prize went to Sinenjonga High School in Milnerton and 3rd prize to Phandulwazi High School in Phillipi). Prizes were presented during assembly, created a lot of excitement, but more importantly – served to encourage and motivate the student body.

The end of year results will be available in the 2016/2017 Annual Report which we hope to bring to you towards the end of April 2017 – below follows the JUNE EXAM RESULTS:

Schools: 2016 we had 2120 bursars registered with the fund. 1891 (89%) Bursars sent us their June results, of which 1363 qualified for their second payments. Adequate performance is necessary for ASF to continue providing support and the learner's attention is drawn to the fact that they need to reapply every year. The largest percentage drop-offs occur with the gr8 learners, clearly indicating the difficulty in transitioning from primary to high school. A similar trend is noted with the gr10 learners which speaks volumes with regards to their ill informed choice of subjects.

476 ASF sponsored matriculants sat for final exams 2016 – the results will be made available in the 2016/2017 Annual Report.

Additional support: In addition to the financial assistance, the fund continues to [1] distribute Advice Booklets to the grade 9 bursars (focussing on subject choice). [2] an interactive grade 11 career guidance workbook that facilitates a 3-way interaction between the learner, parent and educator – leading to a more informed decision on post school direction. [3] The grade 12 bursars receive an information pamphlet giving advice on bursaries, tertiary institutions and [4] eligible grades 10 to 12 learners, based in the Western Cape will receive additional funding to attend the Asset Trust Summer/Winter Schools.

Technical and Further Education and Training Colleges: ECape: Bursaries have been awarded to 44 students, amounting to R146,994.00 and in the WCape bursaries have been awarded to 24 students, amounting to R93,085.00 The final results for their

2016 academic year is not yet available. We continue to offer Student Support Workshops in March and October. Success stories of our students who have completed their studies and are gainfully employed are reported on in our Annual Reports and featured on our website.

We were rather saddened with the departure of our TVET Bursary Manager of four years, but was delighted to hear that Mpumi has settled in Johannesburg and is expecting her first little one – our well wishes go to the happy, expectant parents. So too, were we delighted when, in August, Asanda Gigaba took up the offer to take on management of this portfolio. Asanda is a University of the Western Cape Graduate and a former employee of Access Trust – the sister company to the ASF, predominantly working with students in the TVET sector. Asanda has settled in, assisted with the presentation of the WCape Student Support Workshop and looks forward to building longstanding and mutually rewarding relationships with her students. We are happy to have her join the ASF family.

Remember that:

<p>Donations to the ASF fund are tax deductible. Bank: STANDARD BANK Account Name: AFRICAN SCHOLARS' FUND Account Number: 071404104 Branch Number: 025009</p>
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And do visit our website: www.asf.org.za .

May you and your loved ones experience a blessed and safe year and may we All come to know Peace, Joy and Love - for All.



Eliza James - Director