

## Technology and the burn survivor

**W**hen we think of the ways in which modern technology benefits burn survivors, often the first things that come to mind are advances in the medical management of burn injuries. However, modern technology also plays a huge role in the recovery and reintegration of burn survivors back into society following their discharge from hospital.

Technology is rapidly advancing and the potential to overcome the burden of disability is ever more promising. Artificial limbs are becoming lighter, while offering better mobility, better dexterity and more comfort. For those burn survivors who lose the use of their legs, motorised wheelchairs provide independence and mobility. For small babies with disabilities, even a modern baby pushchair can enhance care and mobility greatly.

The internet provides many opportunities to support the rehabilitation of burn survivors by enabling access to information, access to support structures, such as discussion groups and NGOs for burn survivors, and access to means to apply for social grants and disability grants.

Touch-screen devices, such as smart phones and tablets, can be harnessed to assist burn survivors in the classroom. Whereas previously many young burn survivors with finger or hand loss could not clutch a pen or pencil and therefore never learnt to write, touch screens and electronic pens can now be used to write with single salvaged fingers, or by strapping a touch-screen pen to the amputation stump. Many of these devices are also voice-enabled.

Tablets can be used in the classroom and allow access to hundreds of free educational apps. However, most of these devices are costly.

Phoenix has started providing such devices to needy children, in accordance with requests received from the hospital's occupational and physio therapists. Next time you upgrade your tablet, consider donating the old one to a child supported through the Phoenix Education Fund.



*Me-Kyle Samson and his dad try out their tablet sponsored by the Phoenix Education Fund.*

# Education fund reaches Phase 1 goal of R1M

Phoenix's Education Fund, which was established in 2012 to support the education of burn survivors, has achieved its Phase 1 goal of raising R1m. This milestone was reached thanks to the generosity of many donors and the generous contributions of the UK's annual Action for Burns and Children's Charity Challenge events and the M&M and Bands4Burns fundraisers held in the past few years.

The fund covers the costs of tuition, board and lodging and also transportation to hospital for follow-up treatment, from primary school up to Grade 12. Phoenix is implementing this project in cooperation with St Joseph's Home for Children. We currently provide full support for three children in the Home, as well as a remedial teacher to support these children's special educational needs. A fourth child's schooling and transport costs at Paarl School are also supported by the Fund.



*Laura Gaze of Action for Burns and Children (UK) with two of the beneficiaries of Phoenix's Education Fund.*

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## Action for Burns and Children Charity Challenge

Seventeen bikers and hikers from the United Kingdom and Australia will come to South Africa in November to participate in the fifth annual ABC (Action for Burns and Children) Charity Challenge - a dual hike/bike event in aid of Phoenix.

James Haskell, the England and London Wasps rugby player, has once again shown his support of the event.

The hikers and bikers will arrive in Cape Town on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November and then transfer to Knysna by road to begin their five-day Hike and Bike through the Garden Route to Cape Town. The event will culminate with a celebratory

dinner in Cape Town, followed the next day by a visit to the Burns Unit at Red Cross Children's Hospital, where the participants will have a chance to meet some of the beneficiaries of this event.

The Charity Challenge is a gruelling experience, but also very rewarding for all the participants, some of whom have already completed the event four times!

For those who missed the event this year, why not consider doing it at the same time next year? To book your place, visit the ABC website <http://www.abc-challenge.com/>



## Care Packs with a personal touch

The ladies of the Catholic Women's League have supplied hundreds of beautiful hand-made material bags filled with toiletries for mothers and fathers who rush their children to hospital. These parents often discover that they will need to stay at their child's bedside much longer than anticipated and they are unprepared for it. Phoenix provides a small toiletry bag that allows these tired parents to freshen up. The CWL bags are hand-made and affirm to these parents that other parents are standing by them through a difficult time. These little gestures mean a lot in times of desperation and anguish.



## New dining area for moms provides relief

Small sick children can become very demanding on their mothers, barely allowing them to get to the bathroom or to have a meal. For infection control reasons, out-patients are no longer seen in the ward and are now seen in the out-patient care block. When this room was no longer in use for out-patients, Phoenix offered to convert it into a small dining area with a fridge, microwave oven and table and chairs for moms to catch their breath and a quick meal in close proximity to their children. This also improves overall hygiene in the ward, a key factor where infection control is paramount.



## Koalas, Kangaroos & Beefeaters in Africa

Thanks to our wonderful Australian and British hike and bike supporters who donated lots of soft toys in November 2014, our young burn patients now know about all these wonderful animals. Some of the long-term patients have become educators on these subjects, loving to display their new-found knowledge of the world!



## Scooters to prove I am ready to go home!

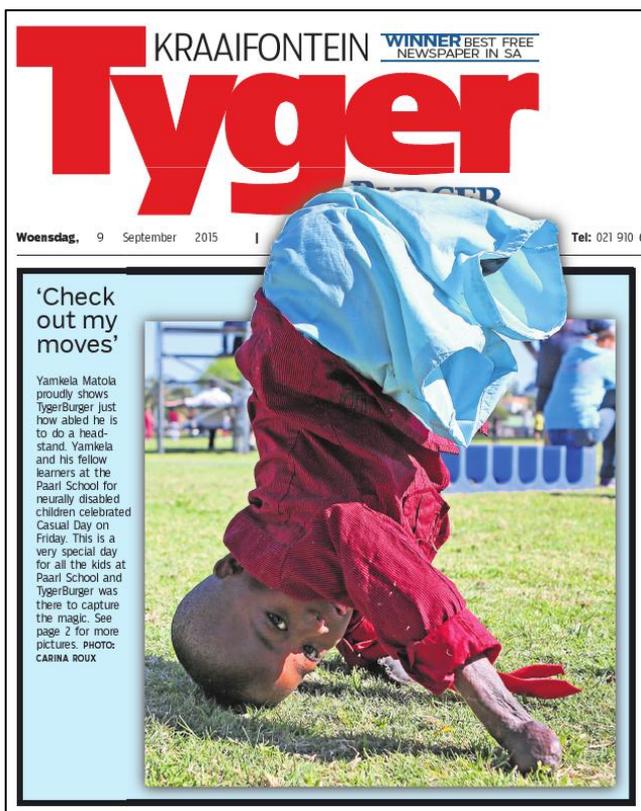
How can you tell when a child is ready to go home from hospital? It's simple - they want to get out of bed and play! Phoenix replaced the previous tired plastic ward scooter bikes with several new ones, much to the delight of the almost-ready-to-go-homers.



## Other illnesses with burn-like effects

Anywhere in the world you may encounter patients in burn units who have in fact not suffered a thermal injury. They have suffered from either meningococcal septicaemia or toxic epidermal necrolysis. The reason for treating these patients in burn units is because the extensive skin and tissue loss and the requirements for wound care, nutrition and dressing changes are much the same as for any large burn. Rehabilitation and reintegration challenges are also very similar to those encountered by burn survivors.

The Phoenix Education Fund has been extended to support meningococcal survivors where brain function was maintained and disability resulted from limb losses. Patients with toxic epidermal necrolysis are assisted with Medic Alert bracelet registration to ensure that the offending drug is never administered again!



*Yamkela Matona, a Phoenix Education Fund scholar, showed his stuff at a school sports day.*

## Pharmacy assistant with a heart of gold

Gail Williams, a pharmacy assistant at Red Cross Hospital's Burn Unit, recently won a competition in the pharmacy department for the best ward communicator, aiding effective communication between the wards and the pharmacy. When she won a shopping voucher, she elected to use the funds to buy hand-made dolls for the burn patients. These wonderful traditional African dolls, sourced from an NGO in Kwazulu Natal, were handed out by Gail to the delighted children. Thank you, Gail!



*Gail with one of the special hand-made dolls she donated to the children in the burns ward.*

**Thank YOU!** We gratefully thank all our individual donors and the following organisations: Action for Burns and Children, Anne Pickering M&M Fundraiser donors, Catholic Women's League, Cripps Sears & Partners.