

Phoenix goes to school

By Michail Rassool

Some 200 Grade 10s of Alexander Sinton Secondary School in Crawford and of Livingstone High, Claremont learnt what it means to be a burn survivor in a society in which one is forced to live a hidden life on account of one's appearance and the stigma surrounding it.

Workshops run at these schools were the first in the Phoenix Burns Project's programme of raising awareness of burn survivors and the ongoing risks of fires in poorer communities where risky sources of heat and light such as fires, paraffin lamps and primus stoves are the norm.

The programme involves an initial session with the Grade 10s, who are considered to be at a level to respond constructively and maturely to the complex issues involved.

The Grade 10s, seen as the ideal stage for raising awareness and conscientising as well as being the most appropriate to organise from an educator's perspective, learnt that small children — who are at a curious and an explorative age — are most likely to be victims of fires in domestic situations.

They learnt that in the Western Cape alone about 1 000 children are treated each year in South Africa's only paediatric burns unit at the Red Cross Children's Hospital, that burn-related injuries are the third most common cause of death among South African children under 5, and in Cape Town itself most burn injuries occur in little children under three years of age.

They also learnt that children severely affected by burn injuries suffer not only physical but emotional and mental trauma as well as social ostracism. Their life choices are affected because their education is often interrupted and their employment opportunities are limited, and suicide rates among teenagers are disproportionately high.

Many of the Grade 10s gasped as actual visuals of the very rapid consumption of a shack dwelling by fire caused by a paraffin lamp falling over were shown to them.

The values of tolerance, acceptance, empathy, being sensitised to the situations of others were emphasised at both workshops. At the Alexander Sinton workshop in February, facilitated by Gerry Gordon and Michèle Twomey, and assisted by Gail Simmermacher, emphasis was placed on



A teacher workshops with pupils at Alexander Sinton as part of a Phoenix burns awareness programme.

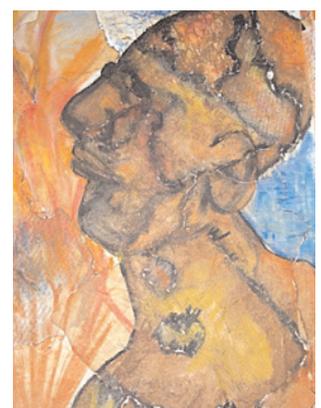
drama sketches and performances.

Burn survivor Lee-Ann Ohlson and Sinton Grade 10 learner Aaesha Hendricks enacted a sketch in which two girls are arranging to meet on Mxit, but one is reluctant to meet face-to-face because of her severe burn scarring. Her friend admits that she too is a burn survivor with scarring, so in the end she is able to relate to her even more closely than before and connect to her fully.

Learners were asked to come up with a project that reflects their conscientising and new awareness. The idea is for a whole body of work to be produced by the learners based on what they have learnt or internalised from the session. This could range from dance, drama, visual art, poetry and essay writing to coming up with a safety plan for households.

Before Livingstone High's initial workshop, visual art teacher Shirage Davids showed evocative paintings on the subject of burns his Grade 10s had done showing moods ranging from fear and desperation to pathos and tragedy.

A future workshop at the Battswood Arts Centre, Grassy Park, will involve Grade 10s from three schools: South Peninsula High, Plumstead; the Dominican School for Deaf Children, Witteborne; and Fairmount High, Grassy Park.



Artwork on the subject of fire and burns created by students of Livingstone High School.

Breadline Africa awards grant to Phoenix

The international funding agency Breadline Africa has awarded a grant of R70 000 to the Phoenix Burns Project to support project coordination costs.

The grant will allow Phoenix to contract the services of a part-time Project Coordinator to run the day-to-day implementation of various projects.

Phoenix Treasurer Mr David Waight said: "This is an important step forward for us. Up until now Phoenix has been relying entirely on unpaid volunteers, but the level of activity has reached the point where we needed some dedicated effort for several hours every day. This grant will allow us to engage the necessary effort



while at the same time ensuring that the donations received from the public will be spent directly on programmes that benefit burn survivors."

Breadline Africa raises funding internationally and distributes it to many groups and individuals working in ten prioritised areas to uplift African communities. Phoenix is the first South African organisation working with burn survivors to receive support from Breadline Africa.

"We are extremely grateful to Breadline Africa for their generous contribution to support our work with child burn survivors," David said.

Counselling for a new life

In March Phoenix launched its Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programme. This programme addresses a desperate need for psychological counselling and social integration support for burn survivors. Without such support, it is well known that many child burn survivors will resort to suicide, prostitution or gangsterism. These outcomes can be avoided through addressing self-image, social reintegration and skills training.

The programme is coordinated by a professional counsellor, with the aid of volunteer professional assistants. The patients and their families receive counselling for one hour on a weekly or fortnightly basis, depending on the urgency and specific needs. After the initial assessment and treatment plan, follow-up visits may be between 30-45 minutes. Progress is assessed at each visit and the treatment plan is adjusted accordingly.

In working with the children, the therapists use art and craft activities.

"It looks like play, and the children experience it as such, but through this medium we can work very effectively with the children to achieve a variety of outcomes," says one therapist, who cannot be named for professional reasons.

Occasional outings to public places are used to get the children to practise the social skills that they are taught in the programme and to build their self-confidence.

Patients are also assessed medically for scar maturation, contractures and possible need for referral for further reconstructive surgery. In this way, the pro-



Patients in the rehabilitation programme receive close personal attention.

gramme is also addressing the huge gap in post-discharge medical follow-up care for burn survivors.

This programme currently operates on Saturday mornings from 09:00 to 12:00 at a venue in Observatory, Cape Town, and is available free of charge to children with burn injuries and their caregivers.

For more information, contact Dr Roux Martinez on email at admin@pbp.org.za or telephonically at 082 932 9504.

Be a Friend of Phoenix

With the "Friends of Phoenix" campaign, members of the public and companies can support the organisation financially.

At the moment, all work done by Phoenix is performed on a voluntary basis. However, to accomplish our objectives and challenges, we are inviting the public to join our work not just as funders, but as a part of Phoenix. This means that we will keep our Friends informed on new

developments, showing them how their support has helped.

Friends can also assist us by raising awareness about Phoenix and recruiting more friends.

To obtain copies of the "Friends of Phoenix" brochure, which explains why we exist and what we aim to accomplish, please phone David Waight at 083 3300016 or e-mail admin@pbp.org.za, or download it in PDF format at www.pbp.org.za/supportus.htm



Dermatome dream comes true

In April, the British company Cripps Sears and Partners donated a state-of-the-art Humecca D80 dermatome and accessories to the Burns Unit at Red Cross Children's Hospital.

A dermatome is an instrument that is used to harvest healthy, unburnt skin for transplanting to badly burnt areas, often providing life-saving skin cover for the patient.

This new dermatome will greatly improve the throughput, precision and cosmetic results of skin grafting procedures on children, and ultimately make a significant contribution to their long-term recovery prospects.



The Humecca D80 dermatome



Dermatome dream comes true as Mr Christopher Cripps presents the Humecca D80 dermatome to Prof Heinz Rode of Red Cross Children's Hospital as ...as hospital staff and friends look on.

The decision by Cripps Sears and Partners to donate the dermatome was facilitated by Mrs Carolyn Cripps OBE, a Member of Phoenix's Board of Advisors and also Phoenix's representative in the UK.

In November 2008, Mrs Cripps visited the Burns Unit at Red Cross Children's Hospital with her husband, Mr Michael Cripps, and his business partner, Mr Andrew Somerville. During the visit it was established that the dermatomes in use were worn and unreliable, and that having a new state-of-the-art dermatome would be highly desirable. On her return to the UK, Mrs Cripps started making the necessary arrangements to procure this instrument for Red Cross Children's Hospital.

The donation was funded by the Action for Burns in Children Fund, established by Cripps Sears and Partners in 2008 to focus the company's long-standing commitment to support those affected by burns, particularly children. The fund receives contributions from Cripps Sears and Partners, and its clients and contacts.

A big Thank You! To Cripps Sears and Partners and their Action for Burns in Children Fund for assisting child burn survivors in this way. Thank you also to Carolyn and Michael's son Chris for his special presentation and delivery of the dermatome.

FILL A TIN FOR CHANGE

Your small change can make a big change in a burn survivor's life.

Through the generosity of DivFood, a division of Nampak, we have introduced collection tins as one of our fundraising activities.



Please consider keeping a collection tin in your home to put all the small change cluttering up your purse or wallet. Every cent helps, and it all adds up!

Better still, why not support Phoenix by taking a carton of collection tins to distribute in your school, your office or among your friends?

If you would like to take a tin, please contact Patricia Waight on 072 261 1885.

PHOENIX FIRE MONITOR

Shack fires reported in Cape Town newspapers during the period 1 February 2009 – 30 June 2009

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| 10 June | New Rest informal settlement in Gugulethu
Fire guts 10 homes, 40 people left homeless. |
| 13 May | Du Noon informal settlement
Fire razes 30 homes. About 120 people homeless. |
| 9 March | Joe Slovo informal settlement
Fire razes 400 shacks, leaves 1600 people homeless. |
| 2 March | Delft informal settlement
Father and two-week-old baby die in blaze. Mother in critical condition. |
| 1 March | Du Noon informal settlement
One person dies, over 100 people left homeless. |
| 15 February | Philippi informal settlement
Fire destroys 80 shacks, 320 people left homeless |

TOTAL: 3 DEATHS, 490 HOMES DESTROYED, OVER 2000 HOMELESS

Please note that this list is not exhaustive

We extend our heartfelt condolences to all who lost their loved ones and their homes or possessions in these tragic events.



The Magnificats, who gave a benefit performance to raise funds for Phoenix at the Diocesan College in Rondebosch.

Magnificats raise voices for Phoenix

Cape Town choir The Magnificats held a benefit concert for Phoenix at the Diocesan College (also known as Bishops) in Rondebosch on 13 May 2009. All the proceeds from the evening were donated to Phoenix.

The event was organised by Mr Peter Walsh, a member of the Magnificats and also a great supporter of Phoenix. In 2008, Peter ran the Comrades Marathon for Phoenix. He had intended to run the Comrades again for Phoenix in 2009, but was prevented from doing so by a knee injury. Nevertheless, he was determined to arrange a fundraising event for Phoenix, and in this way the benefit concert came about.

The Magnificats, led by Mark Murray, put on a great performance, with a diverse programme that offered something for everyone. They sang well known and lesser known pieces by composers such as Joseph Haydn, Edward Elgar and Andrew Lloyd Webber.

Phoenix would like to say a big THANK YOU! to Peter Walsh and the Magnificats for a great performance and

also to the Principal of the Diocesan College for donating the venue for the evening. We also thank all those who supported the concert with their attendance and with their donations.

Catholic Women rattle a tin for us

Where there is a will to give, there is a way. The Catholic Women's League in the archdiocese of Cape Town decided to raise funds for Phoenix after hearing about the organisation's work by asking members to deposit their small change a collection "tin" improvised from a plastic coffee creamer container.



Thank you, generous donors

We thank the following individuals and organisations that made financial and/or material contributions to the Phoenix Burns Project during the period January to July 2009:

C. Albertyn and friends, J. Annas, P.D. Attenborough, Y. Bouwer, R.A. Charton, G. Jensen, S. Marx, D. Olivier, E. Poulton, G. Ramplin, Mr/Ms Savage, P. Walsh, T. Wessels, and D. Williams.

A special thank you to our regular individual donors and to our many anonymous donors: Breadline Africa, Catholic Women's League, Catholic Church of Constantia, Catholic Church of Durbanville, The Magnificats, Woolworths Trust.

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