

Message from Rigby

Dear friends, partners and donors, it's my pleasure to commend this feedback to you in the hope that you too will share our joy in these early pioneering years of our 100year + vision.

I often refer to it as 'BUILDING OUR ISLAND OF HOPE IN THE SEA OF DISPAIR!' What we give ourselves to today, can help lay the foundations of hope for generations to come. The Bridges team and staff are fully committed to spending our lives towards this possibility.

As we emerge from the limitations of Covid we are delighted to report that interest in our mission to uplift and empower schools and learners from the most under-resourced areas of CT, is increasing. This is largely made possible by a team of highly skilled trainers who turn an ordinary 3-day school period into something deeply impactful for both learners and staff. It is also made possible by a growing pool of donors and partners who also understand the mission-critical call to spend some of your lives and resources in this most strategic way!

Enjoy the read and feel free to be in touch with us at any time.

Together in hope,

Rigby

Chairman of the Board

Team News



Brent du Toit joined our team as the Bridges Camp Director in Nov 2022. Brent brings a wealth of experience working in Youth Development Programmes, including the Catalyx Foundation and Mbekweni Youth Centre. He is a Pastor in his community and has a big heart for impacting youth in South Africa.



Team News (cont.)



Earl Ray Smith (known as Ray) joined us in January this year. Growing up in Belhar, Ray knows what it takes to rise above adverse conditions. He has a Master's degree in Environmental Science and completed his studies in Austria. He has worked as a camp leader and outdoor educator in Cape Town and Ohio, USA. He has a big personality and quickly rises the 'gees' levels in any group! He's also a trained first aider, life saver and nature enthusiast. We are grateful to have him as a role model and Facilitator on our team.

Feedback

We started the year with a staff indaba at Bridges, connecting as a new team around our purpose statement and developing the Bridges Educational Programme.

Our purpose is to provide enriching educational camp experiences for children from under-resourced communities, where they develop values and life skills that will positively impact the trajectory of their lives.



Have a look at our new Education Programme doc (attached) for an overview of the core skills- cognitive, social emotional and physical that we work on with the children while they are at Bridges. We also have 5 core values that we weave throughout the programme: Courage, Respect, Trust, Commitment and Teamwork. Each camp session has been developed with specific outcomes in mind. Also read more about our L.E.A.D model framework that has been the basis for our programme development.

In January we hosted a principal engagement session at Bridges, with principals from all schools that have been invited to attend the Bridges Educational Programme this year. This gave them an opportunity to see the beautiful Bridges campus and hear more about our Programme. Ray soon had the principals moving and laughing

with an ice breaker, introducing themselves with animal names and following him in a war cry! The principals were all very excited by the details of the Programme and the world class facilities. This paved the way for smooth cooperation from schools, with all of them eager for their learners to experience this type of opportunity.

We then held a trial camp in early February, with 40 children from youth groups in Langa, Mitchel's Plein and Delft. Three learners unfortunately brought weed to smoke on camp and had to be sent home. Although this is heart breaking, all three learners have since been connected to an intervention programme and are receiving help. This is exactly what we signed up for, working with the most vulnerable youth, to impact the trajectory of their lives for good. The trial camp was a great way for the team to test the programme and resources and learn where to make changes.



Our team then witnessed another miracle in the Bridges story. Two days after the COVID regulations '1m social distancing' rule was relaxed in schools, we got approval from the Western Cape Education Department for our first school to attend camp! This process usually takes a minimum of 6 weeks!

The first official school camp at Bridges, was with Boundary Primary from Bonteheuwel, from 22-24 February. 60 Grade 7 Learners and 4 Educators arrived by bus in high spirits. Our feedback forms show that 100% of learners enjoyed camp; learned a lot about themselves, teamwork, commitment, trust and respect; learned new skills; made positive life memories and can't wait to return next year! Apart from the programme, the learners feedback shows us that they also loved the beds, the food, the showers and the Bridges coaches! All of it! One little girl said she had never slept in such a comfortable bed and wished she could swap her bedroom for her camp room. The Educators also gave us very positive feedback, saying that they could already see changes in learners on camp - English and Afrikaans learners teaming together for the first time and one specific child who never says a word in class, came out of his shell and shared with the coaches how much the experience had meant to him.

A few of the boys unfortunately behaved inappropriately with each other on the first night of camp and had to go home. These hardened tweens actually started crying when they saw the transport arrive to collect them, because they realised they had wasted a wonderful opportunity. We needed to send out a firm message, through the Grade 7's, to the younger grades visiting later this year (and in the years to come), that such behaviour will not be tolerated. As soon as the culprits left camp, we saw the other learners relax and engage without fear. This experience has helped the Educators to identify learners that need extra intervention.



“I would like to extend my gratitude to the Coaches at Bridges Retreat for the phenomenal camp we attended from 08 to 10 March 2022. Our learners were engaged on all levels, physically, mentally as well as emotionally. The physical activities were designed with the learner in mind, and this was evident in how the learners took to each activity with enthusiasm.”

Mrs Dawn Africa-Karels, Acting Principal of Disa Primary.

“For many of our learners, coming to Bridges is like a trip overseas - many of them have never left their own community.”

Principal from one of our Partner Schools.



Our second and third camps with Trevour Manual Primary School from Fisantekraal went smoothly. Trevour Manual is an isiXhosa school, which we are prepared for two of our Facilitators, Ziba and Bianca being able to speak to the children in isiXhosa when needed. Because of the large size of the Grade 7 group, we split them over 2 camps. 68 learners and 5 Educators attended the first camp and 104 learners and 6 educators attended the next camp.

Our fourth camp was with Disa Primary School, also in Bonteheuwel. 78 Learners and 5 Educators attended and had a wonderful experience.

Total Impact So Far

5 Camps
350 Learners
20 Educators



Plans for Term 2, 2022

We started our camps with Grade 7 learners and will now focus on Grade 5 and 6 groups from the same schools. We will also start working with some schools in the Franschhoek area- Simondium Primary and Wemmershoek Primary. The Simondium Principal told our team that this is exactly the type of opportunity she has been praying for, for her learners and she has been so moved to be accepted (as a school) into our Programme. We have another 20 exciting and impactful camps planned for the rest of 2022!



Financial Overview

We have had paying guests staying at Bridges every weekend since Feb, thanks to COVID easing and more people being keen to go away in groups again. The profit from these paid bookings all goes towards paying shared operational expenses and helping to fund the Education Programme.

We are still needing to raise another R2.3 million to be able to hold the remaining 20 camps we have planned for 2022. This is a big target, but we are having some good conversations with potential donors and we are confident that the Bridges story will continue to unfold.

Thank you

Thank you to all our generous donors for partnering with us to make the impossible possible for the learners that we are reaching! At every camp we see children learning, growing, experiencing and changing.

Thank you for partnering with us to impact these precious young lives for good.