

Dear Partners and Friends,

We thank you for being part of the Bridges Team this year. We are so happy to share our news from 2023 and celebrate the year with you. It has been a successful consolidating year for the Bridges team. The OEP participating schools have been with us for 2 years now and in 2023 and the reputation of the camps among the principals, educators and parents has grown. In 2024 we anticipate an increased number of learners attending the camps – around 100 learners and educators for each of our planned 33 camps.

Thank you to all our donors who are making the incredible vision of Bridges possible. We are also grateful for a milestone event this year - a generous donation towards our capital repayment and site development which gives us the hope of finish the repayment over the next four years.

Together with the OEP and Bridges staff, we are all contributing towards ‘providing enriching outdoor 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’. The feedback we have had from learners, educators, and principals this year has been so exciting and humbling. We look forward to 2024 being a year of refinement and flourishing, building on the foundations laid this past year.

We wish you and your families a joy-filled holiday season!

Kind regards,

Rigby

Chairman of the Board



Team News

Farewell to Cath

Earlier in 2023, Catherine Janse van Rensburg sadly had to leave us suddenly due to personal reasons. Cath played a vital part in setting up Bridges to be the organisation it is today. She broke ground on our OEP camps, implementing the vision of Bridges, establishing policies, designing curriculum and recruiting staff. Her heart for seeing change in young lives shone through, and her legacy will always remain with us.



Catherine Janse van Rensburg

In July, Charnay Kleinsmith bridged the management gap in addition to her usual HR consulting job, and we thank her for her hard work and hours she has poured into the role.



Charnay Kleinsmith

New Managing Director

In November Jennifer Crombie was appointed as the new Managing Director. She has been an active member of Common Ground Church Rondebosch for the past 23 years and volunteered on a team led by Ryan Termorshuizen for a year after school. Jen studied medicine at UCT and has worked as a GP in Pinelands for the past 10 years, owning her own private practice for 7 of those years.



Jennifer Crombie

In August she felt God lead her to leave her practice without reason. Without Jen asking, within 2 weeks someone had offered to buy her practice. Two weeks later she met with Ryan to discuss Strength Finders, and the rest is history. Jen brings relational, organisational and leadership skills to her role. We warmly welcome her to the team!

Hospitality Team

We would like to say a big thank you to our hospitality heroes, who work behind the scenes to make sure that the campus is ready for each group of learners. This team plays a huge role in caring for learners by preparing their rooms, making delicious meals and snacks, and maintaining the campus as a whole. They have excelled in their service this year and we thank them for the long hours that they have given to Bridges. We see from the school feedback that the facilities at Bridges are one of the biggest factors that makes our Outdoor Education Programme a memorable experience for learners, and so we are very grateful for our amazing hospitality team!



This year Renee Daniels has been promoted to Kitchen and House Keeping Supervisor. Renee has been working at Bridges since 2012 and is an amazing asset to our team. She is positive, incredibly hard-working and carries out her work with excellence. We are grateful to have her oversight of our kitchen and housekeeping team.

We congratulate her on this well-deserved milestone!

Toiletry Pack & Beanie Donations

Due to generous donations and wonderful volunteers, we have been able to send each learner home with a toiletry pack. Every pack includes a facecloth, toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, and a bar of soap. Thank you to Tessa Dyer for sourcing all the products to go into the packs and for organising volunteer packing events throughout 2023!

During our winter camps, we were also able to give each learner a knitted beanie from the Knitting Fairies, a group of volunteer knitters. There is something truly special about receiving an item that has taken hours of skill and care to create. Thank you to each volunteer for your thoughtful and generous donations!



Outdoor Education Programme

During our second year of OEPs, our programme content has been further improved and consolidated. The camp coaches are feeling more settled in their roles and have developed a greater sense of confidence in their facilitation of groups and group activities.

Towards the end of the year, the team assigned the four learner groups into tribes rather than colour groups. They gave the learners tribe names and tribe war cries. This was highly successful in creating a sense of belonging and kinship among the learners, which has spilled over into their school relationships. When they return next year, they will be put into the same tribe with the same facilitators.

The feedback on the programme from principals and educators below is priceless and inspires us to continue this work.

SCHOOL FEEDBACK

Not only have learners had a memorable camp experience, but educators have also noticed a marked change in behaviour and school culture in the months after coming to Bridges!

“I can really see changes in some of the kids. I see one boy at school in Grade 5 that was always in the office. After he came back from the camp, he was a different kid, and we don’t see him in the principal’s office anymore.”

Desmond Jonkers,
Joostenberg Primary

Teachers from Trevor Manuel Primary have also noticed a change in behaviour in the classroom:

“There have been positive changes in some of the learners, as they are more focused at school and are more inclined to listen to one another.”

“Ever since they went to camp, behaviour has changed in a very good way, and teamwork skills have also improved.”

“There has been change in the way in which they conduct themselves amongst each other, especially during break time.”

“Spending 3 days on camp with the learners outside a school environment allowed us the opportunity to build personal relationships, which greatly improved learner behaviour in the classroom, and made learners more eager to listen and, thus, more receptive to lesson content. The camps have made it possible for us as educators to connect with and build positive relationships with learners, which has significantly lessened the need for disciplinary measures, and have incited new-found dedication to academics among learners.

The learners do not stop talking about the camp. Specifically, they refer to the fun activities, clean and safe environment, delicious abundance of food, and showers. I know that these camps are life-changing experiences for many children, most of whom have never slept in their own bed, had a warm shower, or had access to multiple meals per day.

Forever grateful for you and the incredible work you and your team do at Bridges.”

Dillon Henwood,
Educator at Elnor Primary School

Camp #1

**ALPINE PRIMARY
MITCHELLS PLAIN
GRADE 5 (GROUP 2)**

**No. of Learners: 46
No. of Educators: 4**

This was an outstanding camp! We saw learners latching onto our core values of respect, courage and trust as they participated in the programme. Throughout the camp activities, learners showed high energy, good manners towards facilitators, educators and other learners, and a playful attitude, even when facing challenging tasks. We were excited to see the educators from the school actively engaging throughout the programme and investing in the opportunity for learners to develop new skills. Educator investment signals that changes and learnings may be taken back to the classroom after the camp experience, making the impact of our camps extend much further than the week spent at Bridges.



Camp #2

**TREVOR MANUEL PRIMARY
FISSANTEKRAAL
GRADE 5 (GROUP 1)**

**No. of Learners: 68
No. of Educators: 5**

Trevor Manuel Primary's Grade 5s arrived at Bridges with excitement and eagerness for their time at camp. This group of learners was diverse in terms of race, first languages and home environments, but they took the opportunity of being at Bridges to bond and build new friendships. Learners commented on how safe they felt at Bridges and said that they wished they could stay longer. One learner said that he wished everyone on his street could come on the OEP to learn the things that he had learnt on camp. Hearing these comments was an encouragement to our camp coaches and staff, who strive to create an excellent camp experience for learners. As they boarded the bus to head home, our camp coaches enjoyed seeing so many big hugs, bright smiles, and waves goodbye. We look forward to having this group back in Grade 6!

Camp #3

TREVOR MANUEL PRIMARY
FISSANTEKRAAL
GRADE 5 (GROUP 2)

No. of Learners: 65
No. of Educators: 5

The second group of Grade 5s from Trevor Manuel was as wonderful as the first, facing every activity with enthusiasm and laughter. They listened to instructions well and were courageous as they faced new obstacles and challenges that they hadn't completed before. Through trying new activities and practicing new skills, the learners were able to explore their own strengths and abilities, building up their levels of self-awareness. The learners were excited to have a visit from their deputy principal during the camp. We appreciated the deputy's visit and enjoyed showing them around and presenting the programme on the ground. The school very kindly sent a bucket of KFC chicken to thank the camp coaches and hospitality staff for their hard work during the camp. This gesture was greatly appreciated by our team!

Camp #4

JOOSTENBERG PRIMARY
JOOSTENBERG
GRADE 5

No. of Learners: 79
No. of Educators: 4

For our final camp of the year, Joostenberg Primary introduced their new cohort of Grade 5s to Bridges, and we had a great time! Our camp coaches noticed that this group was well-prepared, arriving with a solid understanding of what the camp programme is all about. They were familiar with the camp rules and were eager to get dive into activities once they arrived. This was especially encouraging, as it indicated that the school has greatly improved in planning and communication since their previous camp. Joostenberg Primary is evidently placing a higher value on the OEPs and actively working to make sure that their learners receive the best camp experience possible. The learners thoroughly enjoyed their camp activities and the support that they received from the coaches. This was an excellent camp to round up the year at Bridges!



2023 IMPACT



32 GRADE CAMPS

2,342 LEARNERS

132 EDUCATORS

17,318 MEALS SERVED

We are grateful for every person who stands behind Bridges as we pursue our vision to provide an enriching outdoor educational camp experience for children from under-resourced communities. Through the support that you've provided this year, 2,342 learners have received an excellent camp programme, building strong relationships with coaches, educators and peers. Each child has received 7 nourishing meals, a warm bed, a toiletry pack, goodie bag and training in leadership, self-management, communication, problem-solving, teamwork and gross motor skills.

2024 will be our third year of the programme, which means that some learners who first attended in 2022 will be completing their full Grade 5-7 cycle of camps! We look forward to another year of encouraging learners to explore their potential and are eager to continue seeing the fruit of seeds planted in these young lives.

