

TERM 3 | 2026 NEWSLETTER

Letters from Camp

Dear Bridges Community,

Every so often, something arrives that reminds us exactly why we do this work.

This term, it was a letter we received, from Wes-Eind Primary, addressed to our coaches. We wanted to share it with you, because **you are part of this story too.**

Your generosity and belief in our work make these experiences possible, and this letter is a wonderful reminder of the difference we are making together.

To the incredible Bridges Outdoor Education Programme coaches,

Thank you for being such a remarkable team and for the countless hours you invest in the lives of our learners. Your passion, dedication, encouragement, and unwavering support have created opportunities for our young leaders to discover their strengths, embrace challenges, and grow in confidence.

The lessons learned, memories made, and relationships built during this journey will stay with them for a lifetime. You have inspired them to step outside their comfort zones, believe in themselves, and explore who they are and who they can become.

Your impact reaches far beyond the camp experience. You have helped shape character, build resilience, and nurture future leaders. For that, we are deeply grateful.

Thank you for making a difference. The learners will never forget the positive influence you have had on their lives.

*With sincere appreciation and gratitude,
— WES-EIND PRIMARY SCHOOL*

Term 3 Camps Overview



Between July and September, Bridges hosted nine camps, welcoming 732 learners and 38 educators from partner schools across the Western Cape — from Malmesbury and Gugulethu to Mitchell's Plain, Elsies River, Franschhoek and Simondium.

This term, we welcomed Grade 5s and Grade 6s. For many, it was their first camp; for others, it was a return to a place they'd been counting down the days to revisit since their Grade 5 experience!

It's often the little moments that tell the biggest stories. At Petunia Primary's August camp, learners quickly moved from calling their coaches by name to "Mami", "Tannie" and "Oom" — affectionate family terms that spoke volumes about the trust and connection growing between them.



On a hike during the combined Riverlands and Bonga camp, a group of girls walked alongside our volunteers, sharing stories about their families, futures and dreams. Sometimes, the most meaningful conversations happen simply by walking together.

And at Alpine Primary, educators reflected on the value of our multi-year programme: by Grade 7, learners have grown so much that staff can see the difference — and know to be patient with the Grade 5s just beginning their journey!

These moments remind us that camp is about so much more than three days away from home.

It's about building trust, growing in confidence and helping young people discover who they can become — year after year.



In Their Own Words

What They Took Home

At the end of every camp, we ask learners what they'll take home with them.
Here's some of what they told us this term:

"I will always remember that teamwork makes the dream work."

— LEARNER, ELNOR PRIMARY, GRADE 5



"I remember when I was doing the human ladder and I almost fell — but my teammates helped me."

— LEARNER, ELNOR PRIMARY, GRADE 6



"How the coaches care for us, and we learned about respect."

— LEARNER, SIMONDIUM PRIMARY, GRADE 5



"Me enjoying coach Siya, coach Tiff and coach Yara — the best coaches of all time."

— LEARNER, WES-EIND PRIMARY, GRADE 5



"Coach, I cannot wait to come back next year — I wish I could stay here forever."

— LEARNER, SHARED BY COACH SIYA,
PETUNIA PRIMARY, GRADE 5



Learner Impact

The Changes We Are Seeing

The Bridges Outdoor Education Programme exists because three days away from ordinary life can start to change how a child sees themselves and the world around them.

One of our facilitators put it like this:

“Coming off the bus, I saw the sparkle in their eyes as they took in the mountains, the soccer and rugby field, and the pool. For many it was the first time outside their community... It reminded me that impact starts with creating a space where learners feel safe and full of possibility.”

— COACH NAYE, BRIDGES FACILITATOR, PETUNIA PRIMARY

Scared to Finish the Hike

A Grade 5 learner at Dalubuhle Primary spent most of the second-day hike quiet — taking part, but never quite speaking up.

That evening, at the campfire, her educator sat beside her and asked how she was feeling about camp. She admitted she'd been scared from the start: scared she wouldn't finish the hike, scared the other learners would laugh if she fell behind.

Instead, her team had cheered her on and helped her through it. ‘I learned that I am stronger than I thought,’ she told her educator.

The Rules are the Same for Everyone Here

During a hike at Alpine Primary's camp, a Grade 5 boy who lives with his grandmother asked one of our coaches why the teams and the rules stayed the same for everyone, no exceptions.

She explained that it came down to integrity — no favourites, no cutting corners. He thought about it, then said that where he lives, you need a gang to feel protected.

At Bridges, he said, he felt protected simply because things were fair and consistent.

“That short conversation inspired me so much, and showed me the real impact of our coaches and this programme.”

— EDUCATOR, DALUBUHLE PRIMARY,
GRADE 5

“That moment showed me how our integrity gives learners who are surrounded by chaos a safe space to just be children and learn.”

— COACH NAYE, BRIDGES FACILITATOR,
ALPINE PRIMARY

Learner Impact Continued...

What Educators are Observing

“Learners who did not do well in school took responsibility at camp and showed leadership. Conflict between learners was at a minimum, compared to how it is at school.”

— EDUCATOR, ELNOR PRIMARY, GRADE 6

“The change learners experience away from school, and the environment at home where they're often in fight-or-flight mode — to see a different side of them, a different personality come forward in a safe space.”

— JUNETTA GOOSEN, EDUCATOR, ELNOR PRIMARY, GRADE 6

“There were a lot of learners who have lost either one or both of their parents. They were so comfortable talking about their feelings and how they miss them. I'm grateful that Bridges creates a space where learners can open up.”

— MARTELIZE FREDERIKS, EDUCATOR, WES-EIND PRIMARY, GRADE 5

What Our Data Shows

720 Grade 5 and Grade 6 learners completed post-camp assessments this term. Among them:

78%

said they can now think of different ways to solve a problem

77%

of Grade 6 learners feel more prepared for the challenges ahead

1 in 5

Grade 5 learners said the most exciting new thing at camp was simply sleeping in their own bed

Respect & Sportsmanship

the two values learners most often said they'd carry back to school

Every one of those numbers has a face attached to it. That's what the data is really counting.

Mid-Year Impact Report

If you haven't already seen it, our Mid-Year Impact Report takes a much deeper look at what's changing for learners, educators, facilitators and school leadership across our partner schools in the first half of 2026 — full data set, more learner stories, and a breakdown across each of our five impact areas.

[Check it Out](#)

2026 Impact to Date

Behind Every Number Is a Story
Already this year, your support has enabled:

31
CAMPS

113
EDUCATORS

2,237
LEARNERS

14
PARTNER SCHOOLS

16,450
NUTRITIOUS MEALS

4,700
WARM BEDS & SHOWERS

10,540
COACHING HOURS

682
LO-ALIGNED ACTIVITIES

None of those numbers mean much on their own. But multiply any one of them by a single child's face, and you start to understand what we're actually counting: a bed that was warm instead of worrying, a conversation that didn't happen anywhere else, a version of a child that only came out because someone made room for it.

Fundraising Update

Thanks to your generosity, we've already reached **93% of this year's fundraising goal** — closer to fully funding 2026 than we've ever been at this point in the year.

To close the gap and finish the year strong, we're seeking funding for our final two camps, at:

ZAR 170,000 per camp

ZAR 1,700 per learner

If you'd like to help us cross the finish line, please contact Catherine at catherine@bridgesretreat.co.za, or become a monthly donor here:



SNAPSCAN

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PEACH PAYMENTS

Bridges in the Media

This term, Cath joined Pippa Hudson on the Family Matter segment on Cape Talk to talk about a question we sit with constantly: Can resilience actually be taught? It was a welcome chance to share what years of running this programme have shown us — that with the right environment, it can.

[Listen to the Conversation Here](#)

Volunteers at Bridges

For Mandela Month, we welcomed a group of boys from Kidd House at Bishops to Bridges for the day. They didn't come to watch — they helped clear the grounds and joined our coaches running activities for the learners on camp that week. It was a small thing and a big thing at once: a group of young men choosing to spend a Wednesday in service of other young people they'd never met.

We're grateful for their time, and for everyone who shows our learners that there are people outside their own circle who show up for them.



Staff Training

A programme is only as strong as the people running it, so we keep investing in ours.

This term, Siya and Charmelle completed a Child Protection course through Nation Builder, Stacey and Yara qualified through the NSRI's water safety course, and several of our facilitators completed First Aid training.

None of it shows up in a camp photograph, but it sits behind every activity we run — our learners' safety and care depend on it, and we don't treat it as optional.

Thank You!

Thank you for reading this far — and for everything on these pages that only exists because you showed up for it.

A letter like the one from Wes-Eind doesn't find its way to us without you first finding your way to us.

Here's to the next camp, the next letter, and everything still to be written.

With gratitude,
The Bridges Team

