

**10<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**OF MORNING STAR CHILDREN'S CENTRE.**  
**21<sup>ST</sup> AUGUST 2009**  
**GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT**

**OUR MISSION STATEMENT**

To provide an interdisciplinary daily program of optimal care for HIV/AIDS children so that they can experience the very best quality of life possible in a Christian environment.

It's hard to believe that we've been operating for nearly 10 years already. Within this period the number of children we care for on a daily basis has increased from 8 – 132 and our staff quota from 4 – 39.

Our current statistics are:

- ✓ 76 (71 in '08) children attend our Welkom Centre on a daily basis
- ✓ 40 (36 in '08) children attend our Kutlwanong Morning Star each day.
- ✓ We have 17 children in our Primary School
- ✓ There are 39 staff members.
- ✓ 208 of our children are in primary schools in the townships, (from 153 this time last year - an increase of 55) the majority of who come to us for medical assistance & other problems. Our 2 oldest children turned 18 years in July '09.
- ✓ We have tested the blood of 1737 children since our inception in 2000 (327 in the last year).
- ✓ We have buried 212 children (26 since last AGM).
- ✓ 82 of our little ones who tested HIV positive at birth are now negative.
- ✓ About half of the children on our register now access anti-retroviral drugs.
- ✓ We have a waiting list of 130 children:
  - Thabong - 99
  - Kutlwanong - 14
  - Bronville/Hani Park - 17

(Although not attending our Centre on a daily basis, many of these families receive assistance with food, clothing and with government grant applications).

**STAFF:**

This past year has seen an increase in staff at Morning Star – from 36 to 39 strong.

New staff members:

- Ms Elizabeth vd Westhuizen – Operations Manager
- Ms Matlakala Rantso – Receptionist
- Ms Camilla Moholobela– Additional Child Care Worker (Kutlwanong)
- Mr. Andries Mathobisa – 4<sup>th</sup> Driver (Thabong/Welkom)

Child Care Worker, Anna Matiyase was transferred from Welkom to Kutlwanong Morning Star at the beginning of May '09 as Assistant Manager, bringing the staff quota there to 10.

Staff resignations over the past 12 months include:

- Betts Ward-Able – moved to Port Elizabeth
- Caryn. Ward Able – moved to Port Elizabeth
- Emily Mokgoetsi – retired at the end of 2008.

We are, indeed, indebted to them all for their vast contribution to Morning Star and for the many ways they improved our services and brought smiles to our little children. We miss them all – but Bett’s going, in particular, was very hard for all of us. We will ever hold her in our hearts and be grateful to our Lord for sending her to Morning Star for a season

Morning Star’s own little school continues to operate efficiently under the able leadership of experienced educator, Ms Selina Thobi. Unfortunately our school has still not been registered with the Free State Dept. of Education and won’t be, we’re told, until we’re in possession of the long-awaited letter from the Free State Department of Public Works verifying our long-term occupation of our Kopano Complex premises (now 16 months overdue). Our present 17 pupils are all in Grade 1 & 2 and range in age from 6-9 years. The majority will leave us at the end of 2009 and begin at the nearest school to their township homes next January. Our little set-up is not meant to compete with other educational facilities and cater for all children who attend Morning Star. We believe our children should socialize within their communities and move into regular schools when they’re well & old enough to do so. Our prime focus is on little children too ill to attend normal classes and who need Morning Star’s daily intervention & optimum care to properly recover from their ailments.

Thank you, Selina, for all you’ve done and meant to these little children this past year. When I watch you interacting with them and just loving them, I thank God for sending you our way.

Over the past year we’ve been able to establish a fully functional Grade 0 Classroom in our ex waste–recycling facility. Funding for this was made available by Pareto Limited in Johannesburg and we’re extremely grateful to them for stipulating that their grant be used for educational needs.

Our two Grade 0 teachers (Portia Khobi & Thsidi Mohapi in Kutlwanong) started their 2-year ECD (Early Childhood Development Course – Level 4 & 5) at the beginning of this year. They attend lectures at Tosa College in Thabong once a week and are working very hard indeed. Both Portia & Tshidi are wonderful teachers and we’re delighted that they were selected to undergo this training free-of-charge

9 of our children now attend Dunamis Christian School, all of whom have one or more UK sponsor assisting with the payment of fees. Dunamis follows the ACE system of education and uses English as its medium of instruction. In keeping with this, our Grade 0-2’s at Morning Star are also being instructed in English so as to better prepare them for transfer to Dunamis should they be fortunate enough to be selected to start there at the beginning of each new year.

The remainder of our children (18 toddlers/babies & 40 pre-schoolers in Welkom and 40 in Kutlwanong)) continue to enjoy our beautiful facilities to the full each day, are kept clean and well fed at all times, are unconditionally loved & accepted by our staff and are being stimulated in our preschool and whilst playing outdoors.

We especially love having overseas volunteers in our midst as they tend to take a special interest in the neediest of our little ones and provide them with the individual nurturing that we struggle to find time for these days. And, in the midst of all the love and care our wonderful volunteers provide, they’re sharing their talents and skills with

our staff – even when they’re unaware of it – and urging them, by example, to play more with our little ones and how best to do so. Since our last AGM – and up to the end of 2009 – we have/will still benefit from the assistance of the following Volunteers:

- Janet Cross & Phyllis Macphail (CANADA) – March ‘09
- Peter & Glenys Barham (UK) – March ‘09
- Amy Lozier (USA) – June ‘09
- Joel & Clare Daubney (UK) – 9<sup>th</sup> June – 25<sup>th</sup> July ‘09
- Rosemary de Kock & Charissa Holt (Somerset West, Cape P.) – June ‘09
- Jess Holt, Abi Ainscough & Anna Whiteway (UK) – July ‘09
- Robert Dale (UK) – August 2009
- John & Wendy Harris – (UK) Sept. ‘09
- Charmaine Wheatley & Rotarians (AUSTRALIA) – October ‘09
- Phil Heaps – (UK) October ‘09
- Linda Wade: (UK) October ‘09.
- The Bedford Team – 10 altogether (UK) 15<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> Nov. ‘09

These folk come to Morning Star at their own expense and contribute in numerous ways to the well-being of our Centre. They return home enthused with what they’ve seen & experienced and are also well equipped to share our story with their friends & families and to arrange their own fundraising events for our Organisation.

In addition to our fulltime staff members we also enjoy the services of at least 20 part-time volunteers at any given time. These women are utilized in the kitchen and with the cleaning of our premises, with the sorting & packing of new donations and in our little second-hand shop. They receive no remuneration for their services, not even a transport allowance, but are rewarded with a food parcel each month as a ‘thank-you’ token. They all know that if additional staff members are required at Morning Star, they’ll be the ones to be considered first.

### **TRANSPORT:**

We are now the proud owners of 4 mini-buses – 3 Toyotas and a brand new 23-seater Mercedes Sprinter. The latter was added to our fleet in April this year and, in addition to alleviating our shortage of space, has also enabled us to accommodate a few extra children and to get them, plus all our others, to Morning Star by 9.00 am each week-day.

Our 2 older combis continue to give us increasing mechanical problems and are repeatedly undergoing urgent repairs. In fact, dealing with vehicle problems, keeping track of servicing deadlines and the licensing renewal dates of our 6 vehicles (4 mini-buses plus our bakkie & small Kia Picante) is quite a headache for Elizabeth, our Operations Manager. Thankfully, with just 2 combis left to worry about for the year she can begin to breathe easier.

All 4 of our drivers make 4 full return trips each day and spend over 5 hours transporting a total of 140 children between them. Chris Pereko started working part-time at Morning Star earlier this year and, although only responsible for one load of our preschool children now, also collects and delivers the 9 Dunamis pupils every morning/afternoon.

My sincere thanks to you all – Sam, Chris, Thibello and Andries for working the long hours that you do and for always being so willing to go the extra mile.

## **OUR OTHER REGULAR ACTIVITIES:**

1. Monthly Support Group Meetings – geared towards our children’s parents/ carers - continue as always with Sr. Patricia Mbuli, our professional nurse, chairing them. Two meetings are held per month, one in Thabong and one in Kutlwanong, and in total, 60-80 people normally attend.
2. Our Gogos Club (Grandmothers’ Meetings) – also run by Sr. Patricia – are only happening bi-annually now. The number of attendees soared the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2008 and, unfortunately, several were found to be ‘gate-crashing’ and not our children’s primary carer at home at all! Our final meeting for 2009 will be our Christmas Function on 28<sup>th</sup> Nov.  
Thank you, Sr. Patricia, for your enthusiastic involvement in these meetings and for ever being prepared to share your skills with our staff and children’s families alike.
3. Quarterly Teenager Meetings: These continue to take place every 3 months and cater for our older children between the ages of 12 -18 years. We normally get over 40 youngsters at these functions and ever strive to provide them with a variety of activities and treats. My burning desire for these children remains to expose them to sound Biblical teaching, provide them with the opportunity to get to know and support one other in their illnesses and to reach adulthood aware of their HIV statuses, but intent on abstaining from sex before marriage and committing themselves to being faithful to one partner for life.
4. Regular Food Parcels – continue to go out to about 100 recipients every month – mostly to those on our register not yet accessing their relevant government grants. This vital ministry costs Morning Star about R17 000 per month (@ about R170.00 per parcel) – a huge sum of money, indeed! However, we are keenly aware that, to many a family, our simple parcel is the only food they’ll have in their homes the entire month.
5. Our Second-hand Clothing Shop – several dedicated ladies, under the able management of Jane Blane, continued to run this small venture for us. Donations of clothing are down from last year, though, and our profits haven’t amounted to much since Jan. 2009, so we’re in the process of deciding whether to close our little shop down or not. Please, folk, remember to give us your discarded adults & children clothing, outgrown shoes, old towels and household goods when next you ‘spring-clean’ your cupboards.  
A big “thank-you” to you and to your team, Jane, for your ongoing dedication and commitment to keeping the shop running for us.
6. Birthday Parties – every little child’s birthday is celebrated in style at Morning Star. On his/her birthday each receives a gift and a cake to take home to enjoy with the family. Often an overseas sponsor will post a gift to his/her child but, if not, we choose something appropriate from our own exciting gift cupboard.
7. Morning Star Newsletters. These are sent out every 6-8 weeks to an ever-increasing Donor Base. Well over 600 now make their way into homes in South Africa, the United Kingdom and further abroad. Jim Magness, our UK Coordinator, does a sterling job ensuring all those on our Data Base receive a copy & keeping me abreast of our Lloyds & CAF bank balances and any other related matters.

8. Morning Devotions. These sessions continue to take place each morning (except Wednesdays when there's staff training with Sr. Pat) from 8.15 – 9.00am - for all staff. We were fortunate, indeed, to have had the services of both Pastors Trevor Hingle & George vd Westhuizen over the past year and I thank them both for their sustained commitment to our Organisation.
9. Weekly In-Service Staff Training: This takes place early each Wednesday morning and is attended by all our child care workers. It's good to know that our staff is continually being updated on issues pertaining to their jobs and that Sr. Patricia maintains a high standard of work ethic from them at all times.
10. Annual Vegetable Growing Competition in the townships. Our 2009/2010 competition is about to 'kick off' and already we're having enquiries relating thereto. Anna Ramosebi, one of our mothers, oversees this venture each year and past results have shown her to be the ideal person to head up this vital program in the community. The Welkom Rotary Club has sponsored this educational & productive project for several years already and we're hoping they'll be doing so again this year.

### **FUNDRAISING:**

This past year has seen me, once again, spending many hours working on funding applications and reports. We still receive funding from the Free State Government but not nearly enough to sustain our Project fully. We do, however, remain indebted to the Free State Department of Health for our rent-free premises and free water/ electricity. Unfortunately, we stopped receiving our baby milk formula, protein enriched cereals and basic medication from them towards the end of last year which does mean we have to budget for these vital needs ourselves.

Of significance is that the monthly pledges and donations from overseas sponsors have now become a major source of our annual income (about 80%) and are increasingly relied upon for our ongoing sustainability.

Tim Kelly continues to maintain a tight reign on our funds and, although frustrating for me at times, I truly wouldn't want it any other way. I so appreciate you, Tim – and will be devastated when you go on retirement one day. My thanks to Lisa Mans, our Assistant Accountant, for her role in the finance office too and for her deep compassion for our impoverished clients and for the many personal sacrifices she makes on their behalf.

### **UK PROGRAM:**

My annual trips to the United Kingdom have become an integral part of Morning Star's ongoing sustainability. Our latest trip (May '09) saw Lisa Mans & me sharing our story over 20 times, sponsoring out a further 70 children, banking over 20 000 pounds whilst there and travelling in excess of 1000 miles. Because our Donor Base is now so wide-spread, we can no longer visit everywhere, every year, and careful planning is necessary to ensure optimal usage of our time. But, coming on board in this regard and bringing along her particular gifts, is Glenys Barham from Worcester who'll be planning the itinerary for my 2010 trip and has even offered to drive me around the country! She's super efficient and already has me thinking to 2010 and the preliminary plans that can be set in motion now.

Our "Adopt-A-Child-Clothing-Program" continues to function efficiently in the capable hands of Juliet Bekker in Abbots Bromley. Over 150 of our children have

active clothing sponsors in England and receive regular parcels addressed specifically to them. Some weeks between 20-30 parcels arrive at Morning Star, all of which must be opened, recorded, sorted, distributed and acknowledged.

Val Bekker is just the best in coordinating the above as well as our Child Sponsorship Program for us. She corresponds regularly with all our overseas donors, thanking them for parcels/letters sent over and keeping them abreast of 'their child's' progress. At present we have about 250 active "Adopt-a-Child" sponsors in the UK who deposit 20-30 pounds into our bank accounts each month.

Thank you so much, Val, for running these programmes so efficiently and for maintaining the high standard our supporters have come to expect. I'd hate to see you retire one day too!

### **FUTURE EXPANSION:**

Morning Star remains in the precarious position of threatened eviction from its Welkom premises at Kopano Complex (ex-provincial hospital). Although verbal permission to remain here long-term and not loose any of our facilities was secured, written confirmation has not followed. 16 months have passed since our initial communication with government officials in Bloemfontein began and, just before the General Elections this past April, I was making weekly phone-calls to high-ranking officials, pleading our case and concern that this letter be signed and forwarded to us before changes in governance were announced. Alas, to no avail! Thus, upon my return from the UK at the end of May, my lobbying with the Free State government began afresh and my new written appeal to the new MEC Public Works, Ms Fezi Ngubentombi, sent off. So, keep praying! New government officials are still filled with confidence and eager to deliver as was promised, pre-elections!

With our Kutlwanong Centre now fully functional and caring for 40 little children on a daily basis, the time has come to establish a second satellite day care centre in Thabong. We have close to 100 children from this township on our waiting list that we'll never be able to accommodate at our Welkom Centre. We just don't have the space! Each year-end only 20-25 children leave us to start Grade 1 at a township school or to move to another part of the country. Sadly, the only other way we 'loose' our children is when they die!

Negotiations are, therefore, in process to acquire suitable land/premises in Thabong for a new day care centre and we're patiently awaiting feedback from our local Mayoress/ Municipal Manager re: where we'll be allocated. The local authority from the Dept. of Housing has assured me that land is available for our worthy cause and that it's just a matter of time before the matter is finalized.

In the meantime, Peter & Glenys Barham in the UK are keen to initiate fundraising specifically for this worthy cause and sent their nephew and their photographer, Robert Dale, to Morning Star to gather information for them, to prove it. Rob's been with us for a whole month already and has wormed his way into all our hearts. We're all going to miss him when he's gone but our young lady staff members are going to cry the loudest!

### **HIGHLIGHTS SINCE LAST AGM:**

- 5<sup>th</sup> September – Morning Star's Fundraising Dinner held at Diggers Inn. All-in-all, 170 people attended and a profit of R9050.00 realized. (Includes R5000-00 donation from a Thabong doctor).

- 11<sup>th</sup> October – Afrox’s Bambanani Day - held at Tikwe Lodge where our Grade 0-2’s were spoilt and waited on along with other local under-privileged children.
- 21-24<sup>th</sup> October – Annual ‘Sea Trip’ for 18 of our older children. Suitable accommodation was provided at Silver Oaks, Crusade for Christ Campsite, way down the south coast of Kwa Zulu Natal and a wonderful time was had by all.
- 6-8<sup>th</sup> November – 20 of our children won a colouring-in competition in conjunction with Pick ‘n Pay (regional) and enjoyed a train trip from Johannesburg to Durban and visited uShaka Marine World whilst there.
- 28<sup>th</sup> November – The Tshedisanang Project women visited Gold Reef City in Johannesburg.
- 9<sup>th</sup> December – Our Grade 0’s cut a CD at Music Corner, Welkom. (R40-00)
- 12<sup>th</sup> December - Staff picnic with staff & their children taken to Kroonpark Holiday Resort, Kroonstad.
- 4-7<sup>th</sup> March ‘09 – Annual ‘Sea Trip’ for 14 more of our older children. Accommodation was available at our favourite place, The Lily of the Valley near Cato Ridge, much to our delight.
- 1<sup>st</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> May ‘09 – Liza & Joan’s UK Trip.
- 13<sup>th</sup> July – our Grade 1-2’s visit to Bloemfontein Zoo with teacher Selina and our UK volunteers, Joel & Clare Daubney.
- 29<sup>th</sup> July – Our Grade 0’s (both Welkom & Kutlwanong’s) visit to Zebra Crossing (farm/playground) in Bloemfontein. (Their scheduled zoo trip had to be cancelled because of the National Municipal Workers’ Strike)!
- 18<sup>th</sup> July 2009 – Bill Muddyman & Linda Gardiner’s Gala Event at their home in Esher, England, where over 20 000 pounds was raised for Morning Star – even though the weather, Linda says, was RUBBISH!

### **INCOME GENERATION:**

#### **TSHEDISANANG WOMEN’S PROJECT**

Our sole remaining job creation program, our Tshedisanang Women’s Project, is still thriving and ably headed up by Paddy Winson. (*Read Paddy’s Report*).

Thank you, Paddy, for all your hard work for Tshedisanang over the past 12 months. It’s comforting to know you’re at the helm of the Project, steadily guiding it towards greater sustainability and our women to deeper personal growth.

### **BOARD OF GOVERNORS:**

Board meetings continue to take place quarterly and we’re particularly grateful to our Chairman, Ray Laferla and Vice Chairpersons, Noel Wright & Trevor Hingle, for being willing to travel long distances to be present at most of our meetings. We’re thrilled that Dr. Ralph Nhiwatiwa joined the team at the beginning of 2009 and look forward to getting to know him better and gleaning from his expertise and particular point of view.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Board of Governors for their support & commitment to our Organisation over the past year. Your rich contribution and willingness to involve yourselves in our activities and hiccups always are deeply appreciated.

### **VOTE OF THANKS:**

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my staff – the management committee, our child care workers, social auxiliary workers, drivers, the office personnel, our cleaners and gardeners and all our faithful volunteers for their marvellous support of me and Morning Star over the past year. Naming you one by one has become impossible but you surely know by now how much you all mean to me. God has brought us together, knowing your love for little children and your desire to make a difference in the lives of the ones in our care. And remember, Morning Star could not run efficiently without your contribution, no matter how small you think it is.

A special joy for me has been to observe how well the staff at Morning Star, Kutlwanong, has worked together this past year and how easily our new Assistant Manager, Anna Matiyase, slotted into the team when she joined them there in May. Our Kutlwanong Manager, Holygate Malunga, has suffered ill-health for several months this year and, although much better now, did and still does require help in the running of a steadily growing ministry. What's particularly heart-warming about Kutlwanong is that every member of staff always pulls her weight there, whether being observed, expecting a visit from Management or not.

To Elizabeth vd Westhuizen, our new Operations Manager – how well you've fitted into our midst! The saying "dynamite comes in small packages" is so true of you and how quickly assessed us all and got a grip of things here. Your gifts are unique and you've proved to be exactly what Morning Star needed after Betts' departure at the end of March. Thank you so much for your wonderful support, your cheerful spirit and your wise counsel. God has been good to us in replacing Betts with you!

To Mike Tavares – our Morning Star doctor – thank you so much for treating our children free-of-charge again this past year. No words can describe how deeply we value your support of our Organisation. We honestly don't know what we'd do without you!

To Ron, my husband. Thank you for the role you play in supporting me in my job at Morning Star. Thank you for collecting and transporting overseas volunteers, clothing, furniture, materials etc. from Johannesburg back to Welkom. Thank you, too, for all the jobs you do for me at Morning Star over the weekends – and at no cost. Just know that I appreciate your support immensely.

And, in conclusion:

To our Lord Jesus Christ - all praise & thanks to You for what You have accomplished in this place over the past nearly 10 years. You are ever faithful, ever present and ever at work. You have proved to me over and over again that in Your strength all things are possible. My prayer is that You will always be at the centre of what this Organisation stands for and continue to use us all for Your honour and glory.