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The Almond Tree Progress Report June 2022 – September 2022

The past few months have been so rewarding, seeing so much community involvement in the life of The Almond Tree again. The Covid pandemic shut so many opportunities down and now, like the new buds blooming in the Spring, we are seeing so much collaboration and input from those around us, and we are beaming with grateful hearts because of it. Our new school is being worn in comfortably and our current projects are all working well, serving our beneficiaries with excellence.

Thank YOU for your investment in our projects and our people!

This is what your contributions have made possible through this quarter:

	Tree House Nursery CYCC	TAT Cluster Homes CYCC	Delmas CYCC
Capacity for beneficiaries	30	40	25
Number of beneficiaries	31	34	19
Beneficiaries with special needs	2	1	0
Staff (incl. Management/Social)	25	9	16
Number of volunteers	4	2	1
Children Reunified	1	0	3
Children Adopted	2	1	0
Children Fostered	2	0	0

Care and Protection of Vulnerable Children

TAT Tree House CYCC (Ages 0-3)	During this quarter we had a few medical challenges with our babies, but otherwise all the children are in good health and developing well.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical challenges: Baby L had problems with a hernia that he developed, thankfully he was operated on and is doing well. Baby R was born prematurely and experienced problems with reflux while feeding, we had to change her formula to a reflux sensitive formula. • Dental Care is a challenge as many of our children have been neglected or have experience malnutrition which has

	<p>deteriorated their teeth. Some children have cavities that need to be addressed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Load shedding has been a big challenge this quarter, resulting in no hot water to bath the babies and the extremely cold temperatures during winter when the heating is not working. • We are still experiencing challenges with transport, sharing one vehicle between the departments is difficult.
Successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of our babies were adopted into his forever family, we are very happy for him. • We are very grateful to have all our babies needs met. • After losing all our volunteers due to the covid pandemic, we are seeing an influx of volunteers wanting to help, for which we are very grateful.

The children were delighted to experience fun outings during the holidays, thanks to our recreation coordinator – The Bunny Park and the Burger Box yummy ice creams!



TAT Delmas CYCC (Ages 0-3)	<p>We had a quiet quarter, only admitting 4 babies. We had few challenges in the home and we are grateful for wonderful care workers who look after our babies so well. We had two staff members who gave birth to beautiful little girls, and we are so blessed to be a part of their lives as well.</p>
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space for new admissions is a challenge, due to babies not leaving when they are supposed to. • Sourcing dedicated and passionate volunteers is a challenge.
Successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have been able to appoint a fourth care worker over the weekends which has been a great help. • Renovations have started in the home, which includes an office for our social worker and a visiting area. • We discovered Baby L had a small hole in her heart since birth but thankfully, at her follow up in August the hole had completely closed. • We received a wonderful donation of toiletries. • The Project Director and Centre Manager attended a trauma competent course which has equipped them to deal with the babies a lot better.

TAT Forever Cluster Homes

Stories from the Cluster Mothers:



“We celebrated Heritage Day, our kids were so beautiful” -
 Mama Zama
 Heritage Day was a lovely day to celebrate, thank you to
 Rose for the nice outfits for our kids who helped to make the
 bead necklaces - Mama Lucia



“The children were
 blessed with a lovely
 Pizza night! They were
 so happy and grateful!”
 - Mama Letitia and
 Mama Siya



Birthday
 Celebrations are
 always a big
 event. The children
 love to celebrate
 with sweeties and
 cake – Mama
 Kate



TAT Cluster F (Ages 4-13)	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This winter was cold and many of our children got the flu. • During the reintegration program, the remaining children presented with emotional behavior which was challenging for

	<p>us. They feel left out and have many questions, some which we are not able to answer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misunderstanding within our team dynamic was a challenge, resulting in some staff underperforming. • Load shedding has been a challenge, resulting in no water and the village becomes very dark, the children are afraid of the dark. • Having only one vehicle to share between the departments is a challenge.
<p>Successes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the children in house 5 was adopted and we were so happy as a department for the child to find a forever family. • Two of our children that are struggling with their education are receiving speech therapy to assist them in their reading ability. We are excited to see their progress. • We had some training during this time for moms to improve their skills, including first aid, childcare, and computer skills. • Welcoming our second long term volunteer from Netherlands has been a wonderful blessing. We love you Tjissie!



A wonderful team building session helped to bring understanding to our team and encourage teamwork and collaboration together so that we can be successful and grow.



Mandela Day!!

We were blessed with warm winter blankets and sweet treats for the children and all the staff on Mandela Day.

The children loved the delicious fresh 'fat-cakes'



TAT Recreational Coordinator

This was a successful and busy quarter where the children enjoyed many fun outings and an interactive holiday club. We are grateful to have a recreational coordinator working full-time to ensure that our children are exposed to many new experiences and learn about the outside world in a safe way.



Winners of the Pecan-Pie Baking Competition got to enjoy a wonderful outing to the SPUR. The children enjoyed delicious burgers and had full run of the play area. What a treat this was for them!!

The Children's Flight – The children got to experience an amazing day of aviation, flying in small aircraft and helicopters. They received toys, t-shirts, caps, sweets, food galore. A day of YES's. They were so well behaved; we are so proud of them.



Education

	Nurture Nest Pre-school/Little Robins Nest	Children of Promise School
Capacity for beneficiaries	56	75
Number of beneficiaries	46	31
Beneficiaries with special needs	3	0
Part -time staff (Phys Ed Coach)	1	1
Staff (incl. Management/Social)	6	9
Number of volunteers	1	1

Nurture Nest ECD Centre	The Preschool is growing, and we currently have a fair number of public children attending the school, the parents are pleased with the fact that we follow the National Early Learning Framework and curriculum, do termly assessments, reporting and encourage all children to explore, investigate and discover learning through various play opportunities.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently we do not have a permanent Teaching Assistant in the ECD • There are 3 teachers, and they share all duties in the preschool, however, they hardly get non-contact time from the children and there can be some very pressurized days when there are extra-murals.
Successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In July, Teacher Kedibone graduated with her ECD Level 4 and 5 and is now a qualified ECD Practitioner • The swimming program is a great success, the children attend weekly lessons, and this is due to our ongoing sponsorship. • The preschool children join the Children of Promise assembly weekly, they enjoy learning the school song and singing worship songs. • There is a growing interest in the local community for admissions. • Teacher Thalita and Teacher Thandie are continuing with their studies and working towards their diplomas and degrees.

- **Little Robins Play Group** Our Little Robin's playgroup have great fun exploring the sensory bins, riding bikes, playing in the sandpit and mud kitchen. They are very comfortable in their morning routine and are reaching their age-appropriate milestones.



Father's Day Celebration The Nurture Nest Preschool joined COP School in celebrating Father's Day and a fun-filled day was had by all the Baba's on the village and public dads who joined the celebration. Boere-wors rolls, hot chocolate and gifts were shared. The children participated in obstacle courses with the dads, and it was a sight to see. The dads ended off the day with a soccer match and tug-of-war!



Children of Promise Independent School – Grade R Grade 1/2

The Children of Promise school has been busy, the various grades have weekly physical education sessions with Coach Karen. She equips the children with the basic skills for sports such as, mini-netball, tag rugby, mini-hockey, mini-cricket, mini-soccer and running. This perceptual program encourages the crossing of the mid-line, participation, teamwork, and the children have great fun keeping active.

	We were recently blessed with a donation of schoolbooks, which our grade one's have been reading during their reading lessons.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of ongoing therapy for children that have trauma as a barrier to learning in the school. • Speech therapist is needed • Finding a 'relief' teacher that has an understanding for our children • Ongoing training for newly qualified teachers
Successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAT Recreational Coordinator assists with weekly music and drama lessons. • Current teachers that are establishing, implementing, and teaching isiZulu as our First Additional Language. • Occupational Therapist/Volunteer who has weekly sessions with our most urgent cases.



We had an open day for the Nurture Nest Preschool and Children of Promise School in August. There was balloon art, face painting, cupcake decorating, dancing and jumble castles. It was a successful day and people from the community attended.



Our Primary School has been longing for a school library and finally the start of one has emerged thanks to some avid reading enthusiasts in our community who donated many fantastic books and some bookshelves. Look out for more on our library project in our next report!



A wonderful turnout of volunteers to work on our new library project. Books were cleaned and sorted, and shelves painted good as new!!

Social Services

	The Tree House Nursery CYCC	TAT Village Homes CYCC	Delmas CYCC
Beneficiaries received from June 2022 – September 2022	9	0	4
Number of children turned away	21	22 (4-18 years)	11
Reasons for placements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abandonment, abuse, poverty, and drugs. 		
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social workers from other Departments are not cooperative, cases are not moving because they are failing to move children who must be reunified, placed in foster care, or transferred to other institutions. Shortage of transport is a challenge, with the social workers having to use their personal vehicles, which is not always reliable. The demand of social services in Delmas is currently high and our home cannot accommodate this overwhelming need. 		
Successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite challenges with the government services, and court backlogs, we have managed to reunify children with their families as well as facilitating adoption placements both locally and internationally. 		

Social Enterprise Projects – Sewing Seeds

The Almond Tree Enterprise/Skills Development Programme's positioning statement is "TRAINING WOMEN FOR LIFE". Our courses provide skills development on a practical level and encouraging women personally and spiritually.

Observing our first few courses, we can see how valuable the social interaction between the ladies who did the course has been, to encourage and uplift them.



The highlight of this quarter was running the first Basic Beginners Sewing course. The first six candidates were mothers from the permanent residential homes. These ladies exceeded our expectations, and the program was a great success. With no prior experience, each lady achieved creating a beautiful apron they could take home.

Two new volunteers have joined our Sewing Seeds team: Lesley Karam and Erika Rundle.



Mandela Day Fun – Craft Corner – Ladies were challenged to make as many 'granny squares' as possible in 67 minutes for a donation of R67. The squares were donated to a blanket-making charity.

Volunteerism Re-ignites at The Almond Tree

What a delight to have our volunteer program re-ignited after a long dry period after the Covid pandemic crushed all volunteer opportunities.

We have had the privilege of welcoming Keren, who started out as a volunteer and has subsequently joined our team. Keren brings a kind and loving heart to the children, she participates in the holiday programs and spends quality time with the children, helping their moms with their daily responsibilities. Keren is a valuable asset, and we are grateful to have her hands to help.



On an International Note...

We were delighted to welcome Tjissie Trul from the Netherlands as a residential volunteer. We have great hopes that this international partnership with our Dutch friends will open many volunteering opportunities for those wanting to make a difference in the lives of our children.

Tjissie has been a wonderful addition to our team, she is a warm and lovely lady with a heart of gold and so much tender love for children. She has added so much value in her short time with us, including the setting up of a wonderful sensory playroom for our toddlers, in collaboration with other Dutch friends of The Almond Tree. We are so grateful to have this input into the lives of our children and the extra hands and new ideas have been very welcome.





We are thrilled with the new sensory education and stimulation room for our toddlers to improve their language and communication development.

A word from our CEO and Founder – Charmaine McQueen



It always amazes me at what The Almond Tree has achieved and done as I look back over each quarter and this quarter is no exception. When you do the work we do, some days can seem completely overwhelming and stressful, and we have to keep reminding ourselves to celebrate each victory, have fun and enjoy making memories with all of our children. We certainly have done that this quarter, from the Father's Day celebration to some of the children experiencing a helicopter flight for the very first time, birthday parties, fun outings and much more. The Almond Tree is a happy place to be, a place where childhoods are truly redeemed. Thank you to YOU for the support you give to our children. Every effort, however big or small is seen and valued.

Much Love,

Mama-Charmaine

We are Children of Promise, and WE are Worth It!
THANK YOU for supporting us!

Special Note: All information, whether personal or otherwise concerning the children in the care of The Almond Tree or the general operations of The Almond Tree must be considered privileged and confidential – Thank you for keeping our confidence.

The Almond Tree is held together by a strong and loving community. We would not be able to provide the service we do to our beneficiaries if it were not for the love and support received from you.

Every cent YOU have donated has helped to create a loving home for vulnerable children who have a bright future ahead of them.

THANK YOU!