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The Almond Tree Progress Report November 2021 – February 2022

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	40	30	20
Number of beneficiaries	35	23	22
Beneficiaries with special needs	4	1	0
Staff (incl. Management/Social)	25	9	16
Number of volunteers	1	1	1
Children Reunified	2	0	2
Children Adopted	1	0	2
Children Fostered	1	0	0

Care and Protection of Vulnerable Children

TAT Tree House CYCC (Ages 0-3)	This quarter we moved nine of our toddlers to the Cluster homes. Their developmental phase required that they receive more focused attention, and the family model is better suited for their care. The baby home will be able to receive more babies over the next quarter.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special needs child Mr Z struggles to keep his spectacles on and has broken them a few times. It is a challenge for the care staff as he does not have the capacity to understand his need for the glasses.
Successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff and casuals are working well together to ensure our babies are well taken care of. All the toddlers and mini toddlers joined the ECD program in 2022.



Success story:
Baby M was transferred to an organization that specializes in children with special needs.



Christmas was a lovely celebration for the children, they were blessed with wonderful gifts.

<p>TAT Delmas CYCC (Ages 0-3)</p>	<p>Christmas was a wonderful day with presents, biscuits, ice cream and a fun slip and slide which the children loved. January started off with the admission of two beautiful babies.</p>
<p>Challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case delays are a challenge. External social workers request preparation of babies to exit the home, the staff prepare them and their belongings, and are later told that they will no longer leave on that day despite our social workers tireless efforts to finalize the case. This is very stressful and traumatic for the children and the staff.
<p>Successes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been a definite shift in the home regarding unity and teamwork. Everyone is working well together and there is a lot of communication which makes things a lot easier. • The babies are happy and healthy, and the mothers are doing a wonderful job.



We received a beautiful baby girl who was born on Christmas day.

The children were blessed with a lovely outing to SPUR where we handed out their playgroup achievement certificates.



TAT Forever Cluster Homes

The children have adjusted well to the family homes. The cluster community has developed well and the mothers have settled into their roles together taking care of all their children with excellence.

Our deepest thanks to the partners who assisted to get the two latest homes furnished. All the six homes are beautifully furnished and comfortable, offering the children a wonderful family home experience. They are truly blessed.

Meet our Cluster Mothers:



Mam Letitia



Mam Siya



Mam Zama

<p>TAT Cluster F (Ages 4-13)</p>	<p>Two cluster homes were added to the cluster over this period. We moved nine toddlers from the Tree House Baby Centre to the Clusters. The toddlers have adjusted well and are bonding well with their permanent care mothers.</p>
<p>Challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff training is a challenge as it takes time to develop the skills needed for child care and effective child trauma management. • The teens struggle with the effects of peer pressure and general teenage challenges which affect their behaviour and can be taxing on the mothers who have to discipline them effectively and fairly.
<p>Successes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The children were blessed with a lovely Christmas party, they enjoyed the day with their mothers. • The re-integration program continued in December 2021, some children were able to visit their families for Christmas which was very exciting for them. This also benefits the care mothers as they get a bit of a break over the Christmas period. • The holiday family program worked well for the children who did not have family to go to. • The start of the new Children of Promise School in January 2022 was exciting for the children and a big help logistically, being located on our Village property. • Two of our teens represented their school in athletics and netball competitions, this was a great achievement for them and has built their confidence and self-esteem. They also had the privilege of attending a camp trip where they enjoyed creating friendships and experiencing new things.

- The Cluster mothers were delighted to enjoy a braai afternoon with the TAT Board, getting to know them and sharing their stories.



Staff Training in child & youth care, and trauma competency has been a priority for TAT this year and will continue to be prioritized.

We are delighted to have Nadine Green on our staff as our new **Recreational Activities Coordinator**. Nadine has a wealth of experience in music, drama, and most of all creating fun times for the children.



Birthday Parties are celebrated with great excitement at the Clusters. The children love to get spoiled with cakes and treats.

Education

	Nurture Nest Pre-school/Little Robins Nest	Children of Promise School
Capacity for beneficiaries	56	75
Number of beneficiaries	53	29
Beneficiaries with special needs	3	1

Staff (incl. Management/Social)	8	8
Number of volunteers	1	3

Nurture Nest ECD Centre	<p>The preschool was extremely busy towards the end of the year. Every opportunity was devoted to practicing for the end of the year Awards Morning and Grade R graduation. The teachers hosted parent-interviews and prepared reports for the academic year of 2021.</p>
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Little Robin's playgroup has grown into quite a large group. Unfortunately, we do not have a permanent teacher for this group. Child and Youth Care Workers currently assist with facilitation of this group. • A part-time cleaner was enlisted to help in the ECD • Constantly training and upskilling unqualified staff and newly qualified staff is a challenge whilst still trying to establish and grow the preschool. • Outstanding school fees is a challenge • Enrolment forms for 2022 admissions not being returned promptly.
Successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We were blessed with an ECD volunteer for 2 months, which was a big help for the Grade RRR, RR and R teachers. • Teamwork, working together to ensure all deadlines are met before the end of the Academic Year 2021. • Sponsorship for the ECD Swimming Program for 2021 is such a blessing. • Volunteer, Coach Karen, delivers a weekly ball skills/tennis lesson, the children love and benefit from participating in these lessons. • Training money sponsored for staff to receive ECD Level 5 qualification.

Success Story:

The little ones have gained confidence in their own abilities throughout the year, and it is wonderful to see that most of them have reached their age-appropriate milestones.

Grade R Graduation and Awards Ceremony 2021





Valentine's Day was an opportunity to remind the children and parents about the scripture

1 Corinthians 16 v 14

'Let all that you do be done in Love'.

Tennis fun with coach Karen



<p>Children of Promise Independent School – Grade R Grade 1/2</p>	<p>The Children of Promise Independent School received the wonderful news and invite to a registration ceremony towards the end of November 2021. This registration of our Independent school with the Department of Education, has been a 2 year work in progress, and therefore it was such a blessing to know that we could open our doors in January 2022.</p>
<p>Challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing and implementing new systems, procedures, and legislation for the new primary school. • Administration demand from the Department of Education can be overwhelming. • Department of Education SA SAMS administration program is unreliable. • Inconsistent internet connection • Our First Additional Language, isiZulu teacher, resigned the end of January 2022, due to ill health. • Training newly qualified teachers and setting expectations within the classroom to raise the standard of education. • Teaching and working with our current Grade 2 learners who have gaps in their learning journey from Grade 1, having been taken out of a local school and put into our school. • Delays with SACE certifications for the teachers
<p>Successes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donated/sponsored playground equipment and resources for our new school. • Phys Ed and music volunteers have been a great help.

- After First African Language isiZulu teacher resigned, our Grade 2 teacher kindly stepped in and is teaching our Grade 1 and 2 children isiZulu. It is going well.



The education department have worked very hard to get all the necessary classrooms ready for 2022.



We proudly opened the doors of our new primary school on the **12th of January 2022**. We received our Grade R, 1 and 2 children.



Social Services

	The Tree House Nursery CYCC	TAT Village Homes CYCC	Delmas CYCC
Beneficiaries received from November 2021 – February 2022	3	2	9
Number of children turned away	18	12 (4-18 years)	18
Reasons for placements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abandonment – Abuse – Poverty 		
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External Social workers are not cooperative, cases are not moving. They are failing to move children who must be reunified, placed in foster care, or transferred to other institutions. 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are still experiencing challenges with a shortage of vehicles for the department's needs. • The demand for our services in Delmas was high over this period and we were not able to accommodate more children. • Due to the Delmas DSD closing and CMR office space that was available to us, no longer being available, we have no space to conduct family visits in Delmas. This is a challenge and disappointing for the parents who wish to visit their children.
Successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regardless of the delays in the government offices and court backlogs, we have managed to reunify children with their families as well as facilitate adoption placements both locally and internationally. • The Holiday Family Program went very well. The children who did not have family to go to were welcomed by vetted community members. This was such a blessing to them, and they made new loving relationships.



Success Story:

Baby M was placed at TAT in December 2018, together with his half-sister. She was re-united with her family in 2020. He remained in the Almond Tree Delmas until February 2022 and was finally reunited with his family in Limpopo.

The Green-Finger Garden Project

During early Spring (Sep 2021) the following Vegetables were planted: Carrots, Beetroot, Cabbage, Butternut, Gem-Squash, Blue Pumpkin, Green Peppers. Spinach, Tomatoes and Potatoes and Mielies were planted later in the middle of summer.

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A limiting factor is the vast number of trees surrounding the greenhouse at the Bird Sanctuary which casts long shadows over the green house and outdoor vegetables particularly prevalent during Autumn & Winter months when new seedlings are planted. To solve this, we have planted in a new area with more consistent sunlight.
Successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With good weather and regular watering, the harvest this season was good, providing vegetables for our Village children and staff.



Social Enterprise Projects – Sewing Seeds

Our main objective over the last period was to get the factory ready to operate. This included a few simple renovations and having some of the sewing machines serviced.

Thankfully we received funds to employ a very talented dressmaker and sewing instructor for the next six months, who will be hosting our first Basic Beginners Sewing Course in April 2022.

The Sewing Seeds project has offered a great service to the village with alterations, mending and making items for our children and homes.



A word from our CEO and Founder – Charmaine McQueen

What an exciting time in the history books of The Almond Tree as we opened our Children of Promise Independent School not only to the children of The Almond Tree but also to our local community of Crystal Park, Chief Albert Luthuli and Cloverdene.

What a joy it has given me, a previous educator myself, to see a dream of developing a school from the grassroots, that lives and breathes my passion and heart for educating children in a loving, nurturing environment. To see the most vulnerable of children receiving the very best education excites me beyond words. To set our children up for success in every area of their life is what we do at The Almond Tree.



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!