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The Almond Tree Progress Report October 2022 – January 2023

The last quarter of 2022 was a productive time, our international volunteer and friends from the Netherlands blessed us with an incredible new sensory room in our baby home. We are trusting that this room will be a place where a lot of fun and learning through play is had. The children are thriving in both their home lives and at school, and their holiday and Christmas time was delightful in every way.

All thanks to YOU our generous and loyal supporters.

See what your contribution has made possible through this quarter:

	Tree House Nursery CYCC	TAT Cluster Homes CYCC	Delmas CYCC
Capacity for beneficiaries	30	40	25
Number of beneficiaries	33	34	20
Beneficiaries with special needs	2	1	0
Staff (incl. Management/Social)	25	9	16
Number of volunteers	9	0	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)	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This quarter we had two babies with severe developmental challenges, one struggled to feed, and the other to sit unassisted.
Successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After a month of persisting, our care staff were able to get the baby to start drinking. The other baby is receiving therapy to help her gain core muscle strength and improve her gross motor skills. Our volunteers have been very faithful, their extra hands are so helpful with feeding, changing nappies, and playing with the babies. Their help allows time for our care staff to complete other tasks.

- Our casual staff are very dedicated and hard-working.
- Having a doctor who checks on our children monthly is a great help in the early detection of problems and access to specialist referrals when needed. We are very grateful for this service.
- We are grateful to have access to a mobile clinic that comes monthly to vaccinate our babies. This saves us a lot in terms of logistics since we do not have to transport our babies off the property. The sisters are kind to our children and give helpful advice to our care staff.
- Crystal Park Clinic has been a great help in providing therapy sessions for our children twice a month. Occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and speech therapy services are used for our children. This service has been a great benefit to our babies, and we have seen remarkable developmental gains since we started using the clinic.



The new sensory playroom has been a great success, the care staff are using storybooks to encourage the children to develop their communication. The toddlers are becoming comfortable with building small puzzles and saying a few words.



We are so proud of our babies, they are growing and developing well.

TAT Delmas CYCC (Ages 0-3)	The home has had a busy quarter with many admissions. Christmas was a wonderful time with the children being very blessed with presents, clothes and treats.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a great need in the Delmas area for care and protection, greater than we have been able to accommodate. • Storage space for donations has been a challenge.
Successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby S was admitted to Nelson Mandela Children's hospital to receive brain surgery. She was given the best care. • The Delmas community is becoming more involved in the baby home. We received many donations over Christmas time. • Public interest in the home had increased.



One of our babies required brain surgery at 9 weeks old. We are delighted that she has made such a miraculous recovery.

The children enjoyed a fun Christmas with many lovely gifts.



TAT Forever Cluster Homes

Stories from the Cluster Mothers:



Fun family outings have been a great success this quarter.



Little Miss M was re-united with family and left the home. Her siblings were very sad to see her leave, we had to process the children through their loss.



The children enjoyed a lovely train ride at the Bokkie Park.

And a fun day out at the Cedar Junction waterpark.



We celebrated the birthdays of two of our young teens.

They enjoyed a birthday outing to the Burger Box and were spoiled with lovely gifts and clothing.

We are so proud of our young girls developing into lovely young ladies.

TAT Cluster F (Ages 4-13)

Challenges

- We had to say goodbye to our Dutch volunteer who had been with us for three months and who added so much value to the team. The children and staff will miss her very much.
- We have experienced challenges with triggered trauma in a particular child. Our mothers are still learning how to apply their trauma training and need a lot of support and guidance.
- The children that are not able participate in the holiday reintegration program struggle to understand why, they do not understand the social problems their parents are going through.
- There is a need for a dedicated therapist for the children, our social worker has a heavy work load and can only allocate a limited time to therapy sessions.

Successes

- Family day was a great success. The children get very excited to see their family and it makes our mother's hearts happy to see them so excited. The children that were sent to holiday parents, went with new clothing, gifts, and groceries, they were very blessed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our oldest boy was able to go home to visit his mother for the first time, he is a special needs boy, this was a big deal for both of them. • Back to school went very well, all the children received new school uniform and stationery thanks to our generous sponsors. • Successful integration of a new boy and his brother into one of our houses, the children have welcomed them both, and they are happy to have a new big brother in the house.
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We had a special Christmas party with ice-cream cake and many special gifts, and the mothers were blessed with a lovely gift which was much appreciated.

TAT Recreational Coordinator

<p>TAT Recreation</p>	<p>One of our goals has been to create fun adventures for our families to enjoy, to inspire bonding and create deeper connections within the family units. During this quarter we have visited Lory Park Zoo, Johannesburg Zoo, Zita Public Park, Bunny Park, and Cedar Junction Water Park.</p>
<p>Challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising funds for activities has been a challenge, although we have managed to do a lot for the children within our means. • Vehicle space to fit all the children in when we do combined outings is a challenge. We need another bus.
<p>Successes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The children produced a wonderful production for our Annual Event (TAT Picnic in the Park with Friends in the Forest Market). • The children have shown visible improvement in their confidence and ability to speak for themselves and voice their desires. The outings and activities have exposed them to so many new ideas and inspirations.





TAT Annual Picnic and Market Event was a great success. The children performed "This is Me" dance and song production.



A fun day at the Lori Park Zoo and an outing to the Parks Restaurant who always spoil our children and treat them so kindly.

Education

	Nurture Nest Pre-school/Little Robins Nest	Children of Promise School
Capacity for beneficiaries	56	75
Number of beneficiaries	35	45
Beneficiaries with special needs	2	1
Part -time staff (Phys Ed Coach)	1	1
Staff (incl. Management/Social)	5	9
Number of volunteers	2	3

Nurture Nest ECD Centre

Challenges

- Having no teaching assistant for October, November, and December resulted in limited non-contact time for the teachers.
- Having only a part-time (shared) cleaner can be challenging at times when there are jobs to do, and she is not available to help.
- Outstanding school fees with public fee-paying parents.

Successes

- Children reaching their age-appropriate milestones and overcoming certain barriers to learning.
- The tennis volunteer-run program is a great success.
- The children love their sponsored weekly swimming lessons and have gained confidence in the water.



Teddy Bear's Picnic - The ECD had their teddies bear picnic in October. The children and their parents played traditional games and danced together. The children enjoyed 'slipping and sliding' in the sun and picnicking with their favorite teddy and with their parents.



Little Robin's Playgroup Awards Morning - Teacher Kedibone worked very hard preparing the Little Robin's playgroup for their awards morning. Many of these little ones have overcome many trauma barriers and our awards morning is their chance to shine. They recited a poem, sang, and danced. The small audience laughed and danced along, as we celebrated our little one's achievements and milestones for 2022!

<p>Children of Promise Independent School – Grade R Grade 1/2</p>	<p>Our primary school has had a successful, challenging, and courageous 2022! Term 3 and 4 were filled with music lessons, physical education lessons, isiZulu lessons and following the usual curriculum expectations!</p>
<p>Challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having the Grade 2 teacher, teach her homeroom class and teach isiZulu FAL for the other classes (2022) • Limited non-contact periods for teachers (2022) • Forming and implementing our own isiZulu curriculum from scratch, very little support from the DBE. • Outstanding school fees with public paying parents.
<p>Successes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We had a successful first year open as a primary school. • We have networked and joined with teachers in other Ekurhuleni North schools for support in setting assessments. • We have a part-time isiZulu foundation phase teacher now and this has allowed more non-contact time on the teachers timetables. (2023) • Our Grade R class has currently got 20 learners (mostly public children) • Our primary school has grown from 31 learners in 2022 to 45 learners in 2023.



We celebrated '**Teacher Appreciation Day**' during the month of October. It was a wonderful opportunity for every staff member on staff to do a small write-up about their favourite colour, food, hobbies, and reason for working with children.

The Grade R graduates went to The Parks for a fun-filled morning of playing mini-golf and making pizzas.





We celebrated our Grade R graduation and had our first awards morning for our Grade 1 and 2 learners early December. Our grade Rs shared poems and 'what they want to become when they grow up one day', they also got to ring the bell at the bell tower to celebrate their final year before entering 'big school'.

Social Services

	The Tree House Nursery CYCC	TAT Village Homes CYCC	Delmas CYCC
Beneficiaries received from October 2022 – January 2023	1	1	8
Number of children turned away	16	27 (4-18 years)	12
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 even transferred to other institutions. Shortage of vehicles is a challenge. The demand for our service in Delmas is currently high and the house cannot accommodate more children. Load shedding has been a great challenge, no lighting has encouraged petty thieves and resulted in us having to move our social department from their new building back to our head office which was very disappointing. 		
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 facilitating adoption placements both locally and internationally. 		

- Baby B was placed at TAT Delmas in April 2022, He was found abandoned in an open field in Witbank. after he was found abandoned in the bush. He remained in our care until November 2022, when he was finally placed with local adoptive parents.



Reuniting family is one of the great priorities in our work. We were delighted to see little Miss R reunited with her 'gogo'.

TAT Annual Event comes to Life! Picnic in the Park with Friends in the Forest

This quarter we launched our annual event which is a Picnic-Market that involves community vendors showing their wares and various community members, schools and artists performing for our visitors. This was a wonderful family affair, and a great opportunity for our children to showcase their first production – they LOVED it!



Social Enterprise Projects – Sewing Seeds

The sewing courses have continued, we have completed beginner and intermediate sewing courses, making aprons and blouses, which has been a great encouragement and skill building exercise for women in the community who have attended the courses. The advanced course will be the next installment will be our advanced class which will see the ladies making a dress shirt. Rose, our wonderful seamstress continues to add much value to the Village, offering a mending and sewing service to the community.



A word from our Development Manager – Zina Rotherham



The final quarter of 2022 brought with it the revival of eventing since everything went quiet through Covid. We hosted our Annual Picnic in the Park with Friends in the Forest Market on our Village property and it was such a delight to invite our community into our lives to share a fun afternoon of food, fun and fare.

We had various community vendors displaying their goods and lots of entertainment provided by our children and a local school.

Our children had the opportunity to perform their favourite songs and dance, this was such a confidence booster for them and a reminder of how connected we all are.

Thank you to our supporters and community for your continued support and love for our children. Their needs are always met and for this we are truly grateful!

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!