



A HISTORY OF
THE DURBAN
CHILDREN'S HOMES



Foreword

The Durban Children's Homes have served the needs of the city's abandoned, orphaned and deprived youngsters for a century since its establishment in 1905. Volunteer committees ran the Home, raised funds, maintained the buildings and ensured that the children got the love, medical attention, education and cultural and religious opportunities which enabled them to thrive.

In this Centenary Year we salute the vision and selflessness of this great body of citizens who raised young people of whom they can be truly proud.

My grateful thanks to Morag McIntyre for her enthusiasm for and encouragement in this project.

Pam Barnes

Howick, August 2005



The First 90 Years

Humble Beginnings

Originally the Durban Children's Homes were proposed as a crèche for small children from the Durban vicinity. At an informal meeting of five people - Ms. Katharine L A Peel, Mrs. Annetta E L Wiseley, Mrs. Tutton, Mrs. Jameson and Doctor Maurice G Pearson - the project was enthusiastically discussed. This soon led to an official meeting held in the Durban Mayor's Parlour on Friday 12 August 1905 over which the Mayor, Mr. J Ellis Brown, presided and at which Mrs. Elizabeth F Evans was elected the first president of the institution.

Sir Benjamin W Greenacre offered the use of his cottage on the Bayside for the Home, but as this would have cost too much to be made habitable, a house in Second Avenue, Greyville was chosen. It was occupied by the end of September 1905, with Doctor Pearson as its first medical advisor, and Nurse Graham as Matron. The institution was named the Durban Crèche and Children's Homes and it was to accommodate young children of working mothers and of those incapacitated by illness, with preference given to married parents residing in Durban. The official opening took place on the 23 October 1905 but by the end of the year

the house had been found unsuitable - there was no garden - and so the Home was moved to premises at the corner of Berea and Cato Roads where provision could be made for twenty youngsters. Mrs. Graham resigned at the same time.

Tragedy struck in the first three months of the Home's existence when two young children died, despite Dr Pearson's careful ministrations - a sad loss for all. Nevertheless the kindly doctor was recognised by the Committee for his "invaluable help and his affectionate consideration for the inmates of the house". Over the next few years, measles, whooping cough, diphtheria, mumps, scarlet fever and chicken pox reared their heads by turn and the new Matron, Miss Long, became worn out with caring for her ill charges. After seven years of nursing service to the Home, she resigned at the end of 1912, as she was to be married.

The Committee welcomed the offers of public-spirited people to adopt their foundling or orphaned children, but this was quite rare. One child was found virtually abandoned in the servant quarters of a house in Devonshire Avenue in 1907, and a

Miss E Hancock volunteered to take the child to live with her on her brother's farm at Richmond - a lucky youngster indeed.

Sadly for the Committee and the Home, the widowed Mrs. Katharine Peel, who had called that first meeting in her own home and had been an inspiration to all, died on 13 June 1907. She was a member of the now well-known Saunders family of Tongaat.

As the children grew up in the Home, the older girls were placed in service as general servants to Durban householders, a practice deplored in later years as it gave the girls no chance of bettering themselves and gaining independence in the workplace.

Growing Up Fast

Thanks to the energetic fund-raising activities of the Committee and their friends and well-wishers, the organisation soon found itself free of debt and in a sound financial position. By August 1908 the Committee was seeking a site for purpose-built accommodation, to which the Durban Corporation responded generously with the offer of an acre of land in Manning Road opposite Bulwer Park. By July 1909, Mr. Robert H Wiseley had produced a plan for the site, the need for

which was becoming urgent as the existing premises were in a state of disrepair with a leaking roof and white ants in the woodwork.

On 14 February 1910, Architect Mr. Frederick J Ing submitted final building plans. Tenders were called for and that of Mr. J T Granger accepted in June. Building went ahead and on 30 November that year the children moved into their new Home, for which 1,827 pound sterling had been paid. On 21 December the Chief Magistrate Mr. Percy Binns officially opened the building. Three Foundation Stones had been laid in August: one by Mr. Maurice S Evans for the general public, the second by Sir David Hunter for the Natal Government Railways Employees, and the third by Mrs. Gwendolene Greenacre for the children of the neighbourhood.

By the end of 1913, it was realised that, as boys were too old at 14 to be residents of the Home, a separate boys' dormitory should be constructed to house 15 youths in a brick "Railway Cottage", so-named because of the generous ongoing donations made by the employees of the South African Railways. It was reported that the proposed new building would be 2,380 square feet in extent and would cost 1,450 pound sterling.







By March 1914 the accepted tender was for 1,525 pounds, with Mr. Ing as Architect of the cool and airy building which he had designed to stand adjacent to the current one. But the builder went bankrupt on the job and a Mr. McKinley's tender of a further 44 pounds was then accepted. The two new foundation stones were laid on Thursday 4 June. One was set on behalf of the general public by a Mrs. Holmes, and the other for the children of the Railway employees, by the Port Manager, a Scot named Mr. McConnachie. It was pointed out at the time that the Home was strictly interdenominational.

Changes

On 25 April 1914 Mrs. Elizabeth Evans was absent from the monthly Committee meeting, "owing to a carriage accident," but she was nevertheless re-elected as President. However she never really recovered from her injuries and her death was recorded in the Committee's minutes on 14 September, after which Miss B Nichol assumed the presidency. Mr. Maurice Evans, Elizabeth's widower, eventually joined the Homes' governing body, but he passed away in April 1920, having been a valuable member who "had always proved such a good and kind friend to the House". Another Committee member of many years, Miss May Payne, had died by May 1918.

The First World War put a strain on the affairs of the Home when Mr. Edwin Payne resigned as Treasurer to go to the battlefield. Donations were received in memory of those who lost their lives in France. Rev. A S MacPhee, a member of the Committee, lost his only son. By June 1917 another Committee Member, Mrs. Penelope L Chappe had also lost her son, Sgt. Thomas L Chappe of the 6th South African Infantry, who had been injured in active service and died in Durban.

The Railway Cottage was officially opened on 21 December 1914 with Sister Symonds in charge as Matron from 1 January 1915. Lady Mary Greenacre had died that year leaving a bequest to the Home, and here one must mention the members of this family who have been such wonderfully staunch supporters of the Home through the years.

There was an incident in October 1917 when three of the older girls ran away after Sunday School, probably planning to return to their parent's homes. Sister Gertrude Crosby who was in charge of them described it as, "An unfortunate and quite incomprehensible affair as the children were perfectly happy at the Home." It may just

have been a prank, or they may have genuinely longed to see their parents more frequently.

What to do with the older boys had long been a problem, and by 1918 some were being admitted to the Western Trades School in Mooi River.

New Additions

In May 1918 Mr. Ing presented the Committee with the rough plans for the proposed Infants' Home, which were approved. A month later he gave them the finished plans and a tender was awarded to the firm of Dargall & Munro for 5,543 pounds. A generous donor and Durban merchant, Mr. Charles E James gave 1,000 pounds towards the building, as did Mr. Adolph Michaelson of London. The laying of the three Foundation Stones took place on 9 November 1918 - one on behalf of the public, one for the South African Railways Employees and one on behalf of the Committee. The Infants' Home was opened on 28 May 1919 with Sister Gertrude Crosby appointed to run it. In March 1919, Dr Addison, the Home's physician, had wisely





observed that, "it would be much better for the children to have more butter and less jam with their meals." He resigned his position in November of that year and Col. Pearson was asked to fill the vacancy.

Mrs. Short gave up the Presidency in May 1919 as she was leaving for England, and Miss Nicol commented on "the splendid way Mrs. Short had carried out her duties as President". This remark was true, one can be certain, of all those hardworking women who had served before her in a voluntary capacity with such loyalty and devotion.

A hostel was now proposed for boys between 13 and 14 years of age who were continuing

their studies. Mr. Joseph Ellis Brown left a bequest of 500 pounds to the Home in his will, while in September 1919, an anonymous donor left 3,000 pounds for the building of the hostel, to be under the management of the Home. His gift was in memory of his son who was killed in the war, and the mystery donor was eventually identified as Edward G A Saunders, a sugar farmer from Tongaat, while his deceased son was James R Saunders. Mr. Ing was once again asked to design the facility on three acres of land. The original plan for a 27-bed hostel at a cost of 6,000 pounds was reduced, to accommodate only 10 boys at a cost of 4,100 pounds, upon which the generous donor increased his gift to 4,000 pounds. The building went ahead,

the tender of Mr. Albert F Turner having been accepted. It was completed in December 1920.

The boys' hostel was opened on 18 January 1921, the anonymous donor having given an extra 500 pounds for the balance owing on the hostel. Although Mr. Saunders had wished that his name would not be mentioned at all, when the boys themselves asked in 1928 that the name of the boys' hostel be changed, Saunders House was selected as the most appropriate.

In 1927 a severe bout of Dengue Fever broke out amongst the children and staff in the Home and 21 boys were ill with the fever by May. Plans were made in consultation with Mr. Ing to build a sick room at the hostel, a task completed by December.

In 1928 Woodly Sewing Circle came into being - a group of willing and skilled women who sewed and knitted clothing for the children. By 1929 the children were actively participating in Scout and Girl Guide movements, and in July that year two very fortunate boys were chosen to attend the Scout Jamboree in England.

Milestones

The following year the Home celebrated its 25th Anniversary, and a short history of the institution was published in the press, together with photographs, at the instigation of Mrs. Short. There were visits from HRH Princess Alice in August 1930 and the Countess of Clarendon in 1931.



In 1936 it was proposed that a hostel be built for working boys of 18 and over who earned very meager wages. The architect was now to be Australian-born Mr. Reginald N Jackson. The Home's designer from its inception, Mr. Frederick John Ing, had died on 20 February 1936. The latter was spared the sorrow of the presumed death of his only son John, aged 25, who was a Flying Officer with the British Forces.

During 1945 the need to extend the existing buildings to accommodate older girls had been expressed. The South African Woman's Auxiliary Service had indicated an interest in assisting. By 1947 the Command No. 8 (Natal) had erected the S.A.W.A.S building, in memory of those men and women who died during the war and generously donated this building to the Homes. Field Marshall The Rt. Hon. J. C. Smuts laid the foundation stone in July 1947.

In celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Home a picnic and a party were arranged for 11 October 1955 and all those involved were invited to attend one or other function. Many old boys, and girls, together with staff and committee members, enthusiastically responded to this invitation and their attendance at the reunion demonstrated their appreciation for what the Home had done for them and what it meant to them.

It was not until November 1987 that the proposal was made to change the name of the institution from Durban Crèche and Children's Homes to Durban Children's Homes. In May 1988 this became a reality and at the same time the girls' home became known as Francis House as a gesture of appreciation to Mrs. Sylvia Francis, a Committee member of many years. The name of the boys' home was altered to Falcon House - a name chosen by the boys themselves.



The Past 10 Years Celebrating Democracy

New Beginnings

In November 1995, with the change of Government, an affirmative action policy was formulated in relation to the children, the staff and committee members, to cater for the needs of all South Africans. It was recognised that HIV/Aids issues had to be tackled as well as teenage pregnancies and drug abuse. Inevitably the custodial care system for orphaned children (or those whose mothers were seriously ill) was declared outdated.

In 1995, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk resulted in a policy document, which provided children's homes with clear guidelines for the implementation of transformational services. Under the able leadership of Mr. Paul Canter, Chairperson of the Management Committee, the Durban Children's Homes embraced this transformational process and embarked on a journey that resulted in a commitment to

family reunification. Care became treatment-focused, with reunification with family or extended family being the goal. When this was not possible every effort was made to place young people into foster care, thereby ensuring that every young person was given an opportunity to grow and develop within a family environment. This focus also ensured that young people were not left in limbo with no clear plan or direction for their future.

As a result of its commitment to the transformational process, in 1999 the Durban Children's Homes were invited to be the first children's home in South Africa to undergo a Developmental Quality Assurance Assessment. This assessment process was to be the new policy's monitoring and assessment tool for ensuring qualitative service delivery by service providers. By volunteering to participate in this process



the Durban Children's Homes were able to streamline areas for development within the organisation and access a wealth of available resources in terms of consultancy and training.

New Challenges

Also in 1999, the Durban Children's Homes, with support from the National Association of Child Care workers and in partnership with the Lulama Treatment Centre, developed a unique child care response to substance abuse. The result was the Siyakhula Treatment Centre, a 12-week residential programme, which provides young people aged 11 to 17 who are addicted to substances, with a strengths based child care programme, aimed at educating them on the effects of substance abuse and providing developmental opportunities for them to learn new skills for coping with the realities of life. This programme, based in the Meyers Robus Cottage, a facility built for the Durban Children's Homes in 1994 by the North Durban Rotarians, is the only registered treatment centre of its kind to be provided by a children's home in South Africa.

The effects of HIV/AIDS became more evident to the organisation, as more and more of

the young people admitted into the programme were infected with the disease. In response to the special needs of this group of young people, the Durban Children's Homes converted Francis House into a Special Care Unit in 2000. Francis House was renamed Amaqhawe Care Centre, in honour of the young people who had died whilst in the care of the Durban Children's Homes due to the disease. This Zulu word when translated means 'Little Heroes', a fitting tribute to the courage shown by these young people's daily struggle to live with AIDS.

July 2002 saw the formalisation of a partnership between the Durban Children's Homes and the National Association of Child Care Workers, with Durban Children's Homes being responsible for the implementation and management of a model developed by the National Association of Child Care Workers as a response to the growing need to provide child care support to child-headed households within a community context. This project, called the Isibindi Project, was piloted by the Durban Children's Homes in the rural area of Umbumbulu. Three areas within this community benefit from the services offered by this project. The positive and cost-effective outcomes of this community outreach have resulted in the





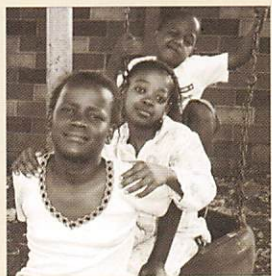
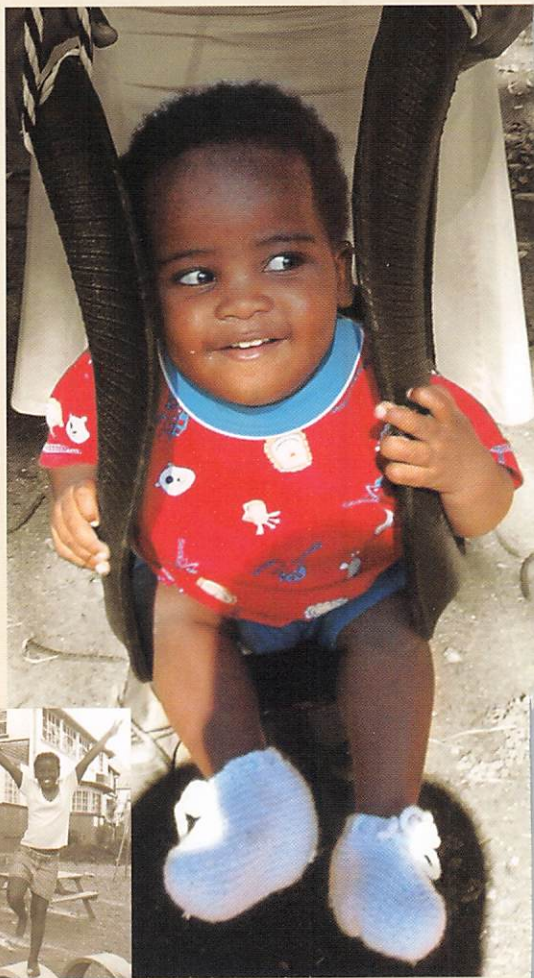
model being replicated in other regions throughout South Africa. The Umbumbulu site has been developed as a learning site and continues to be the forerunner in the development of the model.

Renovations to Falcon House in 2002 provided an opportunity to look at a name change and as was done in the past, the young boys living in the house at the time were given the opportunity to choose an appropriate name. The name chosen was Khayalisha House, meaning 'Our Home'.

Looking to the Future

The Durban Children's Homes, under the able leadership of its Management Committee Members, who over the years have wisely steered the organisation through challenging times, can boast a proud history. The work of this organisation over the past century reflects a deep love and concern for the youngsters committed into its care. They have met the challenges head-on in practical yet inspired ways, unperturbed by criticism and unflinching in the job that needed to be done.

The Durban Community has benefited enormously from the insight, the planning, the fund raising and the general day-to-day work of the Home that gave, and is still striving to give children an opportunity for a better future.



Employees of the Durban Children's Homes 2005

Director

Mandy Goble 15 years service

Social Worker

Premie Pillay 2 years service

Senior Child Care Workers

Zanele Memela 8 years service

Lulama Duze 4 years service

Child and Youth Care Workers

Mavis Jali 17 years service

Ntombenhle Ncube 3 years service

Ntombifuthi Manqele 2 years service

Nontobeko Msomi 1 year service

Sipho Dlamini 2 years service

Lucia Mdletshe 2 years service

Philisiwe Zulu 1 year service

Mary Zungu 5 years service

Thulele Kunene 1 year service

Bonisile Kweyama 1 year service

Bongiwe Qwabe 2 years service

Thembi Mthimkulu 10 years service

Sybil Nzama 10 years service

Nondumiso Damoyi 1 year service

Melita Jali 17 years service

Terence Chili 2 years service

Mfanufikile Nyawose 1 year service

Sikumbuso Shozi 1 year service

Lindokuhle Cele 1 year service

Makhosazane Ndlovu 4 years service

Administrative staff

Coordinator

Janet Innes 21 years service

Secretary

Morag McIntyre 14 years service

Bookkeeper

Caroline Fuller 5 years service

Drivers

Johnny Van Heerden 13 years service

Bheki Khubone 2 years service

Domestic staff

Headgroundsman

Clement Nkosi 11 years service

Gardeners

Richard Zondo 2 years service

Mfana Nsimande 2 years service

Mphele Xulu 1 year service

Cooks

Joyce Khaba 18 years service

Patricia Mkhize 15 years service

Jabu Malinga 4 years service

House assistants

Mildred Ntuli 19 years service

Sylvia Msomi 14 years service

Cynthia Ngcobo 1 year service

Nonhlanhla Mvelese 1 year service

Selina Shwayemba 1 year service

Members of the Management Committee

President

Paul Canter 17 years service

Vice President

Mark Rich 16 years service

Treasurer

Chris Yuill 14 years service

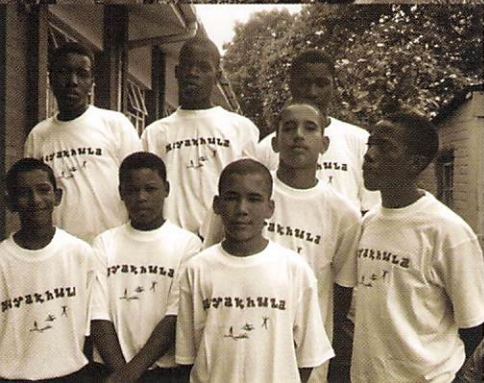
Members

Grace Downham 3 years service

Manrico Barbieri 2 years service

Clem Vernon 2 years service

Raymond Meneses 1 year service



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Banking details

Standard Bank
Musgrave Branch
Current Account
Account Number: 051220385
Branch Code: 2626

List of Needs

Funding:
Operational costs
Special projects/programmes

Items:

Food
Clothing
Stationery
Toiletries
Linen
School uniform sponsorship
Sport equipment
Art and craft materials

Volunteers to assist with:

Homework supervision
Professional services from Psychologists and Occupational Therapists.
Extra mural activities
Transport
Person who is fluent in sign language.

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