



# Newsletter of African AIDS Foundation



*SOLUTIONS: Giving children homes, hope and a future.*

*November 2002*

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John Schwarz, founding chairman of AAF, was the medical superintendent of a hospital among Zulus for 9 years until 1984. As the HIV/AIDS crisis has emerged he has renewed contacts with South Africa. He writes:

There is a natural tendency to protect ourselves when faced with another's distress. Numerous times this truth has been highlighted for me personally. While I try to be sensitive and caring of my patients, there is no question that my insight and pain is more intense when my own family is threatened.

Confronted, at a distance, with the overwhelming anguish of the AIDS crisis, a heightened sense of detachment & compassion fatigue can be very real. Yet the grief experienced in Africa is not diminished just because these people have already endured so many disasters.

On a recent visit to God's Golden Acre in Cato Ridge, my wife, Rosalie, and I were moved to tears by seeing the utter devastation inflicted by AIDS on families. For a "desensitised" doctor, used to dealing with trauma, such an emotional outpouring surprised me. We were privileged to share intimate times with families, and came face to face with the reality of their overwhelming pain and helplessness.

In one household a 10 year old girl was giving palliative care to her dying mother. To see this girl and her younger brother standing in the darkened hut with little food and no medication, while the visiting health workers and Heather Reynolds sang Zulu hymns and prayed around the mother, was the most moving time I have ever experienced.



Dr John Schwarz examines a patient at an outdoor clinic in Cato Ridge.

At Cato Ridge I examined a number of people, in their homes, dying of AIDS. Days after our visit I became aware that a baby and mum, for whom I had offered minor symptomatic treatment (knowing it would make little difference), had both died. Similar circumstances in Australia, with its wealth of resources, see vastly more positive outcomes. My resulting sense of guilt and frustration was awful.

Cato Ridge is a snapshot of the devastation AIDS wreaks across southern Africa. Thank goodness there are people, like Heather Reynolds, who care and are engaged with those in pain.

I am immensely grateful to all the supporters of African AIDS Foundation who are helping us to lighten their burden of care.

### Our Vision

Providing resources for communities & individuals impacted by HIV/AIDS, so that:

- ❖ *the suffering caused by HIV/AIDS is alleviated;*
- ❖ *the spread of the disease is reduced; and*
- ❖ *people become self-supporting contributors in their society.*



***Gerrit Ter Haar is chairman of God's Golden Acre and a retired doctor with 38 years experience in a mission hospital in the Transkei, South Africa. Here he considers some responses to the cataclysm unfolding because of AIDS.***

The AIDS epidemic coexists with crime, rape and unemployment. It has caught most South African authorities off guard.

Already under serviced, the communities in the rural areas become more destabilised by the day. Tribal and civil structures are crippled by the lack of political will and scarce resources.

With the breakdown of the traditional family, South Africa is seeing a young generation descend into a world of hopelessness. For these children the obvious route to survival is with groups of juveniles living off crime and prostitution. Abuse of drugs and alcohol compound the problems encountered.

Daily statistics and crime records in the newspapers confirm this grim picture.

At God's Golden Acre we have accepted the challenge and met some of the most urgent needs of the younger children.

Multi-faceted problems require multi-faceted solutions. The needs being addressed at GGA, albeit on a limited scale, are:

- ❖ **Safe housing** now available to 72 children who have nowhere else to go. Foster mothers care for children living in small units where they receive love and care with the assistance of volunteers from all over the world;
- ❖ For the very small who are sick or dying a **paediatric hospice** of limited capacity (20 patients) is run by qualified nurses;
- ❖ **Basic education** for the children is offered in the crèche and pre-primary school at the Centre. The bigger children are transported daily to the public schools in the surrounding area;
- ❖ **Skills training** is available in the building sector and gardening expertise

is taught at the local demonstration garden.

The biggest challenge, however, is to meet the needs of the children adopted within the traditional family structure.

These families already live with inadequate resources. The orphans present an enormous additional burden. In many households the family is reduced to a granny looking after several grandchildren in a house which is falling down and with no running water or power available for washing, warming and cooking.

❖ **GGA now assists 1,000 children** through regular visits, provision of food parcels, clothes and, in some cases, medical care. In selected cases school fees are given if orphaned children are refused admission to school, in spite of rules about free education.

Also, where houses have fallen apart a building team assists the grannies and children, undertaking repairs making use of whatever local resources are available. The worst scenario is the *Child-Headed Household* where only children are left to run the house. Tragically this is no longer an exception. These children lack every basic need and are unprotected against those who would want to abuse or molest them.

At GGA we are assisting the children in our care to realise their God-given potential. However, much remains to be done in addressing the problems of so many people in so much need. It is only with the gift of resources and the time and love of volunteers that we can continue in this vital work. Thankyou.



Young girls heading off to school



# ...with grateful hearts...with grateful hearts...

*with grateful hearts* is our way of saying thanks to our many generous supporters and hopefully inspiring others to join them.



Paul crosses Anzac Bridge, and (in a personal best time) the finishing line!



Recently, Brian Stewart, Volunteers Coordinator for AAF, received an email from Paul Culley.

Paul had heard about the Foundation through friends, was about to run in the Sydney Marathon and wanted to know if he could somehow bring these two things together.

With a 3 hour run behind him, and sponsorship forms in hand, he was able to raise almost \$1,500 for AAF. What a great effort!

Well done, Paul. (And congratulations on a personal best time in the Marathon. We hope your legs are fully recovered!) Your hard slog will make a real difference in the lives of young Africans suffering the awful fallout of AIDS.

**Wendy Shields, from Victoria, has just returned from a short volunteer visit to God's Golden Acre. She writes of her experience, visiting families, with Heather Reynolds:**

'As Heather shares her vision with me I've never seen anyone so passionate about a cause. Heather is emphatic as she declares that if wealth was distributed fairly then no child would ever starve to death.

The reality is very different. There are few breadwinners - AIDS is wiping out a whole generation... There are few crops - the poor soil sees to that... There are few animals - foot and mouth has seen to that... There is little firewood or water nearby - people must walk long distances to find these things...

I met a 23-year-old girl who is looking after 5 young children. Only one of them is her own, following a raping. Thrown out of her house by the owner, the girl is being helped by GGA. Heather calmly says, "We'll help. Teams of volunteers will help her to build a 3 room house [for A\$3500]." This family is one of hundreds in desperate need in the district around GGA.'

*Volunteers, from around the world, are making a difference daily in the lives of these people. Wendy is one of a number, from Australia, whom the Foundation has interviewed for volunteer service. In November, 2002, Angela Cuming, Todd Eyre and Jason Hamilton leave for 9 weeks at GGA. Karen Groves also heads there, soon, for 6 months. Gillian and Bruce Wilson plan to visit in April, 2003. We are grateful to them all for their willingness to help.*

**For further information on volunteer service contact AAF.**



# Please support African AIDS Foundation!

Dr John Schwarz writes:

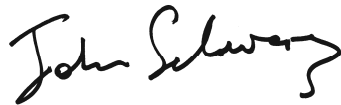
It is very satisfying to see how the money we have been able to send to Africa has transformed the lives of many children in great peril.

Heather Reynolds already helps more than 1000 orphans in the valley. However, it remains the sad reality that Heather has recently had to turn down requests from 45 starving families for food and other assistance. The needs and pressures grow daily at God's Golden Acre.

It is unthinkable that out of our relative abundance we cannot spare something to help little ones with no one else to whom they can turn.

Please help - every cent you give will go directly to children in great need.

Yours with a grateful heart,



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YES, I would love to support African AIDS Foundation!



*Please print*

Name: (Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my cheque for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for the work of AAF.

Please debit my Visa  Bankcard  MasterCard  for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name on card: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like information on:

- African AIDS Foundation
- God's Golden Acre
- AIDS in Africa
- Having a speaker at my church/club/school

I would like:

- Regular updates sent
- My name removed from your mailing list

Please send your response to: African AIDS Foundation (ABN: 39 095 833 935)  
PO Box 701, Narellan. NSW. 2567. Telephone (02) 4658-0580 Fax (02) 4658-0887

