

# Newsletter

December 2011

wordworks

transforming lives through literacy

As 2011 draws to a close, we would like to extend a huge thank-you to all those who have donated to Wordworks over the past year. Your generosity and kindness makes what we do possible – and is changing the lives and futures of South Africa's children. So our sincerest thanks go to:

- The DG Murray Trust
- The Learning Trust
- PRO-PRINT
- Anglo American Chairman's Fund
- Vrygrond Development Trust
- Hout Bay and Llandudno Community Education Trust
- Masicorp
- Centre for Early Childhood Development (CECD)
- The Davis Foundation
- Peoples Education Support Fund, Japan
- Breadline Africa
- Itron
- UWP Consulting
- Sullivan and Mary-Anne O'Carroll (Bursary Fund)
- Our many individual private donors and supporters

## A message of thanks

Looking back on the six years since Wordworks started, what stands out the most is the exceptional people who have come on board with the common goal of giving children a chance at a better future. In every community where we work, we are humbled by parents, volunteers and teachers who are committed to making a difference to the lives of children. Although the challenge to improve education for all South African children remains enormous, through the work we do, we see how providing the right knowledge, tools and opportunities has the potential to change lives. So our heartfelt thanks go to all our wonderful volunteers who give so much of their time and energy. And we celebrate the inspirational parents who are taking bold steps to support learning in their homes and communities.

## Parent programme in Masiphumelele

Masiphumelele Library is a wonderful community venue which Wordworks uses for its Early Literacy Programme and teacher training. From September to November, the library hosted our parent programme for 23 local Grade R parents (pictured). Jenny Birkett facilitated the programme, assisted by Siphokazi Katamzi, a Masi resident. The parents responded with great enthusiasm to the new ideas and materials that they were introduced to. Amongst other things, they were shown how to make little books using plain paper. They loved the idea, and the following week brought in the little books they had made with their children at home, eager to talk about what the children had said as they were drawing, writing or reading them.

At the end of the programme, one parent wrote: "The course has helped me a lot in a way that now I can spend a lot of time with my child, telling her some stories, reading books, chatting together and I can also listen to her."



## New programme in Retreat

In June this year, we had a call from Ruth Stafford, a retired teacher from St Mary's School in Retreat who wanted to know how to go about starting our Early Literacy Programme at St Mary's. Together with the principal, Miss Muller, Ruth recruited 12 parents from the local community who attended a volunteer training session. They have been a truly committed team and with support from Ruth, have grown in confidence and expertise. The teachers helped to identify children who they felt would benefit from extra support, and the school provided a venue for the volunteers to use two mornings a week. Assessments of the 84 children who they have worked with, show that although most of the children started off with reading levels six months to a year behind their grade, many of them will start 2012 at the right level. We would like to congratulate the school, Ruth and all the volunteers for the real difference they are making to the futures of the children at St Mary's.

## Can you help?

At the end of each seven-week parent programme we hold a celebration and parents who have attended regularly receive a certificate. We would also like to be able to give each parent a storybook at the celebration. At one of our schools in Mitchell's Plain where we had funding for these books, one of the parents told us that several weeks after the programme, her little boy still sleeps with the book under his pillow. Please contact us if you are able to make a donation towards purchasing storybooks.

## Contact Us:

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Wordworks recently gave training to the sports coaches at GCU Academy in Heideveld. The photo shows one of the coaches, Tauriq, and pupil, Jayden, enjoying playing a reading game together.

## New website

In September, our brand new website went live. We are thrilled with the new design and user-friendly lay-out. Do visit it at [www.wordworks.org.za](http://www.wordworks.org.za) to find out more about our work and programmes and keep up-to-date with latest developments.

## Profile of a volunteer co-ordinator

In each of the Wordworks sites we are privileged to have volunteer co-ordinators who give of their time and expertise to mentor and support the volunteer teams that run the Early Literacy Programme. Lynette (pictured right with some of her volunteers) is a retired teacher and after sailing around the world was looking for a project to get involved with in the local community. She attended a co-ordinator's training course, translated the volunteer tutor guide into

Afrikaans and trained four volunteers from the community near St Andrew's Primary in Saldanha. There is no room at the school for the volunteers to work, so they set up tables at a nearby church hall every week. At the recent school prize-giving, some of the children they have worked with received prizes for progress, and the volunteers were awarded a special certificate by the principal for their commitment to helping children at the school.



**Our mission:** Wordworks aims to strengthen early literacy and language development in disadvantaged communities through targeted early intervention and the delivery of proven programmes and resources. Wordworks seeks to enable all children to fulfill their learning potential by empowering parents, teachers, community members and volunteers to play a meaningful role in facilitating the early acquisition of reading and writing skills.