

### Lerato learns to swim!

Lerato is a delightful little girl who lives at St Francis Care Centre. As a result of an HIV-related condition, suffered a stroke before the age of 1 year and now suffers from cerebral palsy. She was placed at St Francis as a result of her HIV status but this is not a home that deals specifically with children with physical disabilities and placement in another facility has not yet been organized. As a result, Lerato has not received the various forms of therapy one would hope to give a child with her condition.

As a result of her condition, Lerato is unable to use either of her legs or her right arm as these limbs are spastic. Last year, Becky worked with Lerato on an individual basis to aid in managing her spasticity and to assist with her functional abilities (such as bathing, dressing and feeding). Becky has also been working closely with Lerato's caregivers, giving them weekly exercises and tips for handling Lerato. This year, Becky's most important role has been co-ordinating a multi-disciplinary team to work with Lerato. Becky encouraged the centre's social worker to organize regular physiotherapy and once this was achieved, handed over the role of individual therapy and staff education to the physio.

Last year, the children from St Francis began swimming lessons, but Lerato has never been included in this as it was felt she wouldn't manage. This year Becky managed to convince both the staff at St Francis as well as the swimming teachers to take Lerato into the pool. Her progress has been phenomenal! Lerato loves being in the water and the warm water appears to help ease her spasticity. Becky has worked closely with the swimming teachers to help them with how to transfer Lerato in and out of the pool as well as with handling ideas for her time in the water. All the hard work of everyone involved became worth it last month when Lerato took her first assisted steps!



## Spring

With spring in the air and the memory of cold mornings and long nights fading, we are looking forward to the last stretch of 2008. All too soon it will be the Festive Season. Within a couple of weeks the shops will be starting to entice us to buy for Christmas, kids will start making their wish lists and family and friends will plan spending time together.

At Thusanani Childrens Foundation we will also be preparing to do the last rush of adoption assessments for those babies fortunate enough to go to loving families permanently. How blessed those families will be to have a new baby at their Christmas Tree! The babies not ready for adoption and in need of therapy will continue with us right up to the Holidays.

In the various outreaches to the Children's Homes (Mother Theresa's Home, St. Francis Care Centre, Lambano Baby Sanctuary and The Love of Christ Ministries) therapy will also continue on a regular basis. We will have discussions with management of those Homes to plan for 2009 and we will identify their need for educational toys and special equipment for those children with special needs. The little ones getting ready to go to Big School next year will receive extra dedicated attention to help them be prepared for this step. So often we find that children from an institution such as a children's home have difficulty with their first year of formal education.

We still have a number of workshops scheduled for the rest of 2008. Thusanani hopes to train another 30 care workers in the community and 6 care givers in a children's home before the end of this year, empowering them with knowledge about childhood development and stimulation of young children. This training is free to the participants and we thank our sponsors for their generosity.

Our yearly outing to the Zoo with the children from Mashwenga Informal Settlement is scheduled for the 29th November. The excitement mounts to an all time high as our sponsors, trustees, family and friends all prepare to make this day unforgettable for these vulnerable pre-schoolers. There is a ferry ride, lots of games, watching the animals being fed.....and a possibly visit by a man in a red suit! We promise to capture some of the action on our camera.

At Thusanani we are ready to accept the many donations of educational toys we are expecting over the next few months. People will be clearing the toy boxes of their children and pass on the toys in good condition. Others will buy extra when they shop for their own kids and grandchildren and bring it to us to distribute. This will in turn make it possible for us to donate to the Children's Homes and to Communities where there is need.

### Wish List :

- Educational toys:** "baby Gyms"  
Walkers for toddlers to push while learning to walk
- Other Toys:** Push bikes, tricycles, prams
- Office equipment:** copy paper, fridge, small urn, laptop & training

If you would like to support us, you can make a secure Credit Card Donation via our website. Alternatively the following are our banking details:

**Bank:** Nedbank

**Name of Account:** The Thusanani Children's Foundation

**Branch:** Melrose Arch

**Branch Code:** 196-605

**Account Number:** 1966 466226

