

Pebbles. Changing Lives in the Hemel-en-Aarde

Friday, 20 January 2017 saw the official launch of the Pebbles Hemel-en-Aarde Education Project. Pebbles was established in 2004 and focuses on the children and families of the Winelands communities in the Western Cape.

The Pebbles Hemel-en-Aarde Project was implemented in September 2016 under the capable management of Elizabeth Naudé and thanks to seed funding from the Cape Wine Auction Trust (@CapeWineAuction). Elizabeth explains:

The overall goal of the project is to ensure that the children and families in the Hemel-en-Aarde region have access to a high standard of education, health, social and recreational services – particularly focusing on the less-accessible Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge region.

Particular goals in the Hemel-en-Aarde include the improvement of transport services, the establishment of an additional Early Childhood Development Education facility, the provision of After-School Care facilities, a community centre/training facility and the hosting of cultural and sporting events for the community. Referring to the transport services, Carolyn Martin, co-owner and marketing director of Creation Wines says: “Seeing young children along the road walking many kilometres to school in all weather conditions, sometimes without proper shoes or warm clothes just broke my heart.”

While most of the younger children attend Diepgat Primary School and the older children go to Overberg High School in Caledon, the distances to and from school are a huge obstacle and this was one of the first challenges addressed by the Pebbles Hemel-en-Aarde Project. Thanks to generous donations and fund-raising initiatives the required amount of R570 000

was raised to buy a 22-seater school bus which was ready to transport the children on the first day of the 2017 school year.

The huge need for nursery school and day-care facilities for children who are left at home all day while their parents work on the farms was another challenge. Here the local environmentalist and philanthropist Antony van Hoogstraten came to the rescue, offering facilities on his farm Bergplaas for the establishment of the Pebbles Hemel-en- Aarde Education Project Centre. There are presently two Early Childhood Development classes as well as three After-School Care classes where children can do their homework under the supervision of qualified teachers. They also run an academic support programme for grades 1 to 6. Balanced meals and snacks are provided daily while a computer centre and library are in the pipeline.

Referring to these accomplishments, Elizabeth Naudé said:

We are proud of what has already been achieved and ready to tackle our goals for the future. A huge thank you to all who have supported our project thus far. It is impossible to mention them all by name, but a special word of appreciation goes to Creation Wines, the Beare Foundation, Joe Eberhard, Kaap Agri, Andre and Elsabe du Plessis and Herman Pretorius who so generously contributed towards this worthy cause. In addition we need to mention that Ford went out of their way to ensure we have the bus on time and gave us a significant discount too.

Guests at the official launch of the Pebbles Hemel-en-Aarde Education Project gathered at Creation Wines on the Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge for coffee and tea before being transported in the brand-new bus to Bergplaas for a short introduction to the project and a tour of the facilities.

The next phase will be fund-raising for the After-School Care feeding scheme. Assistance in establishing a vegetable garden is also required while the scheme is in urgent need of an oven. In order to expand the After-School Care facilities, an existing garage needs to be converted into another classroom. Please contact **elizabeth@pebblesproject.co.za** should you wish to help. Creation is a Friend of Rotary International and linked to the Hermanus Rotary Club. Please contact **Alex Vander Sluys** if you are an overseas Rotarian and your club can help with global match funding. More details to follow soon.