



## COLLINS CONNECTION

October-November 2006

Hello the Salesian Family

The famous Collins Takkies are caked with the good earth and a bit of compost, organic of course, as they have participated in the planting of a new crop in the Permaculture garden. They look like a very hard working pair of enthusiasts. The vegetables are now looking splendid in spite of a few days of severe heat and a disrupted water supply. Ryan Dickey and Liza Rossi of Ekukhanyeni came to help and supervised the planting operation. They are very pleased with us. Lethlohonolo has spoken to the hens and Sister Margaret's broom is on stand-bye in case they have sly strategies for greener pastures!

All the candle burning and prayerful chatting to God, Fr Declan and his trusty helpers has paid off. We have received a large donation for the concrete palisade walling for the site we have bought and for the one we are hoping to be able to use for the future Permaculture project. The donor wishes to remain anonymous. We thank them and gratefully celebrate their generosity.

Ekukhanyeni has also received funds enough to include two of our Finetown staff to be trained in the certified Permaculture Design Course scheduled for early next year. Lethlohonolo (Lucky) Khale and Anthony Sephula will be able to teach Permaculture when they have qualified.

Three of the candidates who did the First Aid course have received their certificates. Well done; Lucia Baloyi, Alina Monyane and Mduduzi Ngwenya We are proud of you!

There seems to be no end of good news! I received a phone call from Ireland yesterday. David Kearney, the current president of the Old Boys Union of Clongowles Wood College, has informed me that we have been adopted as their project for the next three years. They hope to raise about a million Rand for us during that period. David was a good friend of Fr Declan Collins. He also indicated that Michael Sheil SJ will be the Old Boys Union president from next year and he has agreed to carry the fundraising efforts forward. We thank all concerned for their commitment and generosity. I have been singing Irish ditties intermittently all day! 'Enya' has been helping with the lyrics and orchestration.

Diarmuid Halpin from the Collins Trust has also contacted me to request some recent photographs of our project activities for the Collins Trust fundraising events that happen around this time of year. Diarmuid will produce a brochure to encourage donations. We are very grateful to all who contribute their time, efforts and money for the Trust. What would we do without you?

It seems that Christmas has come early and our stocking is being expanded to accommodate all these wonderful gifts! Lesedi Trust have indicated that they are interested in funding our 'Beadforlife' training course that is scheduled for early next year. We are in the process of investigating the possibility of getting a trainer from Uganda to run this course. Dr Lark Lands, our contact in the USA is negotiating with a friend whom she says is prepared to conduct the course. We will include some Ekukhanyeni candidates in the training.

Business Partners are still dealing with the problem concerning occupation of the building on our site. They are having trouble locating the address of the Pastor who is using the building. We have some leads from community members who know how this situation happened and who are prepared to help Business Partners resolve the issue. We cannot move any further with our plans until we have secured the legal right to 'vacant occupation' of the site. We are not sure how many candles this will cost! We are developing the all characteristics of good 'Catholic knees' as well!

The 'waiting with bated breath' syndrome continues with very positive connotations: The head of the Government of Bavaria, Mr Sinner, and his entourage visited our Finetown project on Saturday 4 November. We wish you could have been with us. The children welcomed the delegation with

songs and dance in Zulu and Sotho tradition. Sister Therese's Youth Choir from All Saints Parish in Ennerdale sang two songs from their recently produced CD (music and lyrics by Sr Therese) and the Sancta Maria adult choir (Finetwon) sang for them as well. Liza Rossi and I presented the history and vision for the future of our projects. The children presented Mr Sinner with their CD and with a collaged photograph of the Permaculture project. We also gave the visitors our site plan with an interpretation of that.

In his response, Mr Sinner expressed interest in supporting our projects. Mr Fischer, the Bavarian Director of International Relations later indicated to Liza Rossi, who escorted them to Lawley to visit the crèches she supports, that all were very impressed by what they saw and heard. He said that the children we support look happy and confident which is a sure measure of the good care and programmes we supply. The end result is that the Bavarian Government are interested in supporting, not only the Permaculture Partnership with Ekukhanyeni, but also the Laura Vicuña and Declan Collins Educational Centres. We sincerely thank Liza Rossi for her involvement with and inclusion of us in her fundraising efforts. We continue dancing and singing...

I remind you that '**Don Bosco Educational Projects**' is a partnership project between the Salesian Sisters (FMA) and the Salesian Priests and Brothers (SDB). The Partnership comprises the **Declan Collins Educational Centre** and the former Don Bosco Educational Project recently re-named the **Laura Vicuña Educational Centre**. We now have a common constitution and are in the process of establishing a Management Board.

I recently visited Finetown and Jacksonsdrift and did Haybox cookery demonstrations. The results were well appreciated and the meal enjoyed by the participants. I am hoping to get a friend to volunteer to develop this project. I have an 'arm-twisting' meeting with her on 15 November. I think you know what you have to do about this.

I attended the SDB's Southern African Imbizo during October. This meeting set a work vision and targets for the ensuing 6 years. It also served to renew enthusiasm for the charism of Don Bosco. For me, it was a very valuable, informative and inspiring encounter. I continue my work with renewed fire! I am proud to be a Salesian family member.

The All Saints Parish community in Ennerdale will be up-dated on the project's progress on 12 November, a fitting date as it is the day after the anniversary of Fr Declan's death. He will be remembered with prayer and love. Plants and flowers all through the year surround his memorial stone. RIP. We continue to keep the Collins family in our thoughts and prayers.

Overheard from my window: "Mrs Mullen told the Bavarians about a bird lying in the road with its legs in the air. She said a woman found it and the bird said it was lying like that because the sky was falling down and so the bird was holding it up. The woman said the bird had beany-boney legs and how could it hold up the sky? The bird answered that it was doing what it could and what was the woman doing about the falling sky? Mrs Mullen said that that was how our Laura Vicuña Centre started and that we need money. Is she crazy or what?" Let's sincerely hope not!



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