

A JOURNAL FOR THOSE WHO WORK WITH
TROUBLED CHILDREN AND YOUTH AT RISK

Child & Youth Care

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Connecting
**kids with
their world**



GUEST VIEW

Engaging does change kids

Piet brought home an assignment from school — to make a model of a robot. This was not his best thing. He lacked confidence, felt very inferior, was clumsy and not very good with his hands. On top of that he had always been a suspicious and fearful child, trusting none of the staff whom he considered little more than aliens. He nevertheless brought the problem to Matthew, his child care worker. Matthew helped him to sort out his plan for building the robot — but added: "Come along and show me when you get it started."

Piet did bring it along. Matthew said he thought it was coming along OK. "Go through and show your progress to Mrs Meintjies in the kitchen as well." Paula Meintjies was impressed. "That is coming along nicely," she said. "Come and show me when you get further with it. I'd like to see it."

Two or three days later, Piet came back to Matthew who made one or

two suggestions. Of his own accord, Piet then went through to Paula Meintjies in the kitchen. "Wow, that is good progress! What colours are you going to paint it?" Piet told her of his planned colours. Paula also asked whether he would give the robot a name, and they both laughed. "Come back and show me — but also go to Mr Simons, the principal, and show him what you're doing," suggested Paula. "I'm sure he'd like to see."



Piet hadn't really had much to do with Mr Simons. In fact, he'd made a point of staying out of the principal's way. But he went to the office and knocked on the door.

"Come, come!" shouted Mr Simons. "Who is that? Come and talk to me."

Piet was quite relieved by this reception.

He came in with his half-built robot.

"Mrs Meintjies said I must bring this to show you," he began. It's a project I have to do for school. Matthew has also been helping me with it, and I'm thinking of painting it grey, and blue over here."

A slight pause as Mr Simons appraised the progress.

"And don't worry," went on Piet.

"When I have done some more work on it, I'll bring it here again to show you!"

Acknowledgements: Mark Abrahams

FROM THE EDITOR

Whose move in private child care?

In the children's homes system in South Africa there is a serious impasse which needs resolution.

Sweeping and exciting new policies have been developed for the child and youth care system over the past four years, but existing children's homes are daily having to deal in the old way with continuing demand for places for children being found in need of care by children's courts — complicated by the five-year subsidy freeze, a funding crisis, staff retrenchments, and child care workers once more having to deal with groups of fifteen or more children.

Informal surveys have been depressing. In one small poll of eight institutions, all eight expected to close their doors within two years. All report huge operating losses, no salary increases, deterioration in physical facilities, energies moving from the children towards survival, and feelings of low morale, abandonment and frustration.

The major criterion of a recent state funding offer focussed on rural projects while most children's homes are urban-based. The demands of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act added intolerable burdens, and we are now beginning to see the ominous move of staff to government institutions with whom private institutions cannot compete in terms of shifts or salaries.

The spirit is willing...

At the moment it seems that state departments, family welfare agencies, children's courts and the child and youth care system are all playing the game according to different rules. Within child and youth care itself, the private (all the country's children's homes) and the state sector are also playing by different rules. The lead article in this month's issue (page 4) features the impressive family preservation model piloted in Inanda in Durban, which shows the way to exciting new ways of working with young people and their families. This is frustrating for most children's homes, who express willingness to explore such alternative approaches — but they can't move there because (a) they are cooking breakfast for the state's children of an unchanged system with fewer staff, and (b) the new work is not subsidised for them in any way. Only the (seemingly unwanted but still used) old children's home residential model is subsidised. So there is a deadlock.

There must be a way out of this. Are we going to go on daily finding children in need of care — or not? Do we want to meet this need in our country — or not? Do we want to lose these resources (staff, experience, facilities) — or not? Whatever the answers, someone must say so.

As with any impasse, two sides are involved. Most of the above issues are directed clearly at the jig-saw puzzle of national and provincial state sectors, but what moves can the private children's homes make? How creative can they be? What suggestions can they make? And above all, could the two sides not *just talk and listen* to each other?!

MEETING PRIMARY NEEDS

"... A little more to the left."



Child & Youth Care

A journal for those who work with troubled children and youth at risk

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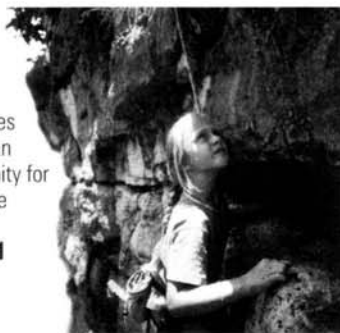
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"I learned that it is possible for any person to change. I cannot condemn all children for the mistakes of a few. I am still involved because I have grown to realise the importance of having someone to guide you when you are young."

Family Preservation

The Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on Young People at Risk has been running an impressive pilot project in the high-risk area of Inanda near Durban. From this brief report, children's agencies can learn about important new ways of working with families and young people at risk.

The Learning Centre

One important reason for extending this pilot project beyond its earlier stages has been the need to share lessons learned through developing a Family Preservation Learning Centre as a national resource. This would serve to also facilitate the replication of Family Preservation programmes throughout the country. The first milestone was the completion of a Family Preservation Training Manual. The compilation of the training manual incorporated a lot of practical experiences and insights gained during the implementation of

the pilot project. We have been able to build a body of theory of Family Preservation and we have added new modules. The following are now developed:

1. An Orientation to Family Preservation.
2. Assessing and using Family Strengths.
3. A Family Preservation Approach to developing Quality Plans with the Family.
4. Teaching Families New Skills.
5. Cultural Competencies for Family Preservation Workers.
6. Family Group Conferencing in family Preservation.
7. A Family Preservation Approach to Family Reunification
8. Youth Mentorship Strategies
9. Community Conferencing Approach

All of the above modules have been designed to be presented over a five to ten-day period, and give people a foundation on Family Preservation as a philosophy as well as related strategies and techniques. Once people have received this foundation and are ready to start implementation, the Learning Centre, through its outreach activities, will provide practi-

cal support with practical skills and tools for the implementation phase.

Families who have benefited from Family Preservation services are also part of the Learning Centre team and they join in the presentation, sharing their experiences and insights.

After the presentations and discussions, visitors to the Learning Centre are taken for home visits where they spend time listening to Family Preservation stories as told by the families themselves. They get the opportunity to see families in their natural circumstances and see the possibilities of rendering Family Preservation services in deprived areas. Such an orientation is crucial for those who wish to replicate Family Preservation services, relating it to their own contexts.

FAMILY PRESERVATION SERVICES

The strength of the family preservation services as developed in the pilot project has been in identifying the various sub-tasks which need to be covered for there to be a chance of overall success in relation to individual families and clients. These essentially centred on the family itself (both offering support to families in difficulty and reuniting separated families), on the young people at risk in these families, and on the community and its role in on-going support.

Intensive Family Support

At the beginning of this phase the Intensive Family Support component had 16 families who had just entered services in the last month of the piloting phase, the team continued to work with these families. In addition, there were 12 more new referrals. In total the team worked with a total of 28 families during this phase. Services are successfully rendered within a period of 4 and 12 weeks. So far there has been no removal of children this year. There are many successful Family Preservation stories from this component, and these have made it worthwhile to invest so much effort in this programme. In addition to working with families, the intensive team has initiated a number of activities that support children and families on their way to recovery. Six children requested help with study skills. These were children whose school performance had dropped and they had poor mathematics and language skills. They felt that at home they did not have enough time and space to study, sometimes they focussed more on their friends and their peers. In response to this request the team initiated a programme to help children master study skills. The team decided to make use of the local libraries which the children had

never used before. They took children and taught them how to use the library, rekindling their interest in learning. They helped the children to formulate questions to teachers based on their difficulties with the subject matter. The response from the teachers was positive. One teacher felt that such intensive support for children improved children's performance and she wished other children could benefit from such a programme. The team now plans to involve parents in a programme to assist their children study better.

The children from this component have also attended an arts workshop and the art teacher discovered that one child had exceptional talent. There was an opportunity for this child to attend further advanced arts classes. Incidentally this was a child whose parents thought he had no interest or talent in anything. Imagine their surprise and their excitement when they were asked if they could help the child with bus fare to attend art classes in town!

'Teenage' problems start at a very young age these days. It is common for children below the age of 12 to be involved in sexual activities. The team found that sexuality-related problems could be best addressed in a group setting. If one wants to make an impact on one child, then the strategy is to involve the child's neighbourhood peers as well. This ensures that the child's immediate environment is addressed together with other risk factors. There are groups of children now meeting regularly, facilitated by member of the team. These groups have fun whilst learning. They address sexuality issues and are helped with a range of adolescent development skills. The parents are excited about these initiatives and they open up their homes for these meetings because there is a shortage of facilities in the area.

Family Reunification Services

What follows is just a glimpse into some of the issues and challenges that the Family Reunification team have to contend with in their attempt to reunify families.

During the past 6 months this team has worked with a total of 30 children from 11 residential facilities around Durban including shelters for street children. There were 10 new referrals from these facilities. With all of these children a series of reunification steps and activities have been undertaken. If one looks at the introductory scenario presented earlier in this section, it is clear that reunification is not a process that is predictable. There is no fully developed reunification formula, nor one which will work with all families, so the process can take a year or even a year and a half before the final reunification is concluded and the child is back permanently with the family. The team planned that the reunification process will be completed with 12 children by the end of December and others in the early part

of 1999. What is important to note is that with every step, children and families are receiving a different service that ensures that the child's broken circle is mended.

There have been many instances where reunification was successful. (See box below)

The reunification team has also conducted numerous workshops for children and parents. Significant among these are those held with children to prepare them for the reunification process. Because removal invokes feelings of helplessness in children and they also lose their sense of belongingness, it was important during these workshops to discuss the removal process, emphasising that removal does not mean loss of parental love.

Very important is the co-operation of the residential facility. If the facility is drawn into the process and the reunification plans, it plays a crucial facilitation role in the process. Those we have worked with have been helpful in many ways. They help children through their own programmes to accept and to prepare for the reality of reunification. They help children with pocket money when children have to go home for weekends during school holidays. This is very important because it addresses the real problems that children face when they

go back home. With this assistance children are not forced to engage in criminal activities just because they need things such as sweets. Children do understand that once they are back with their families they are likely to face conditions where little or no pocket money is given to them. They also use their pocket money very responsibly including paying transport fees when they have to attend reunification workshops and other recreational activities.

Some other notable highlights from this component have been:

- Through the co-operation of a Children's Home, a child was placed in a facility closer to Inanda so as to facilitate family contacts. Previously the child had been placed in a distant institution and there had been no contact between the child and the family. Now the child was able to visit his home during week-ends and school vacations.
- One child was permanently reunited with her family living 300km from Durban. The reunification team was able to engage parents from a distance until the process was completed.

Mhlengi's story

Mhlengi* is a 15 year old boy who was placed in a Children's Home in 1990. At the time he was removed because of his "uncontrollable" behaviour. After admission to the home there was no contact with his family. When the reunification team started to work with him, he expressed a desire to meet his mother but his family had moved from their last known address. The team worked hard trying to locate his mother and the child's grandmother was located at the pension pay-out point. For the first time in six years Mhlengi met his mother and family in an emotional meeting. After that Mhlengi spent the Christmas holidays with his mother as part of the reunification plan. The Reunification team has delivered a range of quality services centred around the needs of the child as well as those of the mother. In assessing Mhlengi's needs, the needs for belonging were paramount in him. He was engaged together with his peers in life skills workshops focussed on family values and enhanced self-esteem. The workshops also addressed the role each child can play as a member of the community. On the other hand his mother joined parents group in



parenting skills workshops thus helping her to take full responsibility of his child. It was important for the mother to have the support of relatives and friends in the process. To this end the team connected her with the child's grandmother, sister and a close network of friends. The team eventually held a family group conference which was

also attended by this support network. During this conference plans were made for the final return of the child. All the facets of his life were looked at — adjustment into the community and the kind of support he would need for this. A new network of children his age in the neighbourhood were brought together by members of the team and they were told about a new friend who will be joining them and how they can assist him to adapt to the new neighbourhood. The family group devised different ways of supporting the mother in

her responsibility, with the grandmother pledging a portion of her pension to assist when necessary. The team and the family looked for a school for him, all the time keeping him informed of all developments and ensuring that his voice was heard. After intensive reunification efforts that lasted for almost 16 months, Mhlengi returned to the care of his mother. He is well and is progressing well at school, doing standard six.

* Not his real name

Family Preservation

■ A child was permanently reunited with her foster family. This is a family that raised him from the time he was a baby but as he grew there were relationship problems. Both the child and the foster family never lost hope of reunification and when it happened it was a dream come true for all.

One of the challenges faced by the reunification team is the integration of children in local schools. The team has experienced resistance from a number of schools who do not want to take children from residential facilities. They are often able to come up with reasons and excuses and in some cases this has deprived the children of education once they got back to their homes.

A high level of advocacy with education authorities is necessary.

Youth Mentor Services

The Youth Support team has faced a number of challenges during this phase. There has been an upsurge of children between the ages 13 and 18 years getting into trouble with the law. This highlights the need for preventive services to be added to this project's early intervention services.

In the past six months the team has worked with a total of 69 children most of them in trouble with the law or at risk of dropping out of school. There have been increased referrals of young people who have attempted suicide. The support of Youth Mentors have proved very effective in such instances because young people in such circumstances need someone to help them. Mentors fulfil a wide range of roles once they start to work with young people. They work on an individual basis with young people, helping them to articulate their needs and, together, to work out solutions.

Where the relationships between young people and their parents have broken down (which is most often the case), mentors help in rebuilding these relationships. The Family Group Conferencing technique is used effectively to mend broken relationships and to foster a sense of belongingness and responsibility.

Mentors also play a crucial role, advocating on behalf of young people especially in schools. Most often young people we work with have had problems in school resulting in long absences from school and even negative attitudes from teachers. It is amazing how facilitators can change the attitudes of young people towards attending school and how they manage to get the co-operation of teachers in supporting young people in their school work. Facilitators from this component have managed to get young people re-admitted to school. There have been instances where even 17-year-old young people have returned to lower classes and received the full support of teachers.

This component offers young people life skills

as well as adolescent development programmes directed at improving their self-esteem. Young people have attended workshops on:

- Leadership development
- Taking responsibility for the direction of your life
- Developing trusting and healthy relationships
- Thinking and creative problem solving skills
- Effective communication, communication with parents

There has been positive feedback from young people as well as from the families on the impact of these skills. There is a belief that once young people undergo these skills, their outlook towards life changes. They begin to act more responsibly, they re-evaluate their relationships with friends and even change their friends if they want to.

We have encountered new challenges that the team lacked skills in dealing with, most particularly in the area of teenage gangsterism. The team will receive advanced skills in working with seriously troubled and even "dangerous" young people in the community.

Community Conferencing

This component has continued with its mission of creating a caring community for children and young people as well as building community support for families. Inanda is a high risk area. When we began the project in the piloting phase, the issues of children were never really on top of the community agenda. The needs of children were only referred to in reference to creches. This component has managed to bring community leadership structures together to explore ways of reducing risk factors for children.

The component continued with community education initiatives on children's issues. This has led to an increase in the number of volunteers who help families at risk to care for children or with concrete services. There is an increasing number of "crisis homes" — families that the teams rely on to provide relief and respite when there is a crisis in a family.

The team is going all out to make sure that every person who comes into contact with a child understands the challenges faced by children and is able to detect signs that the child is at risk. This includes teachers, creche and pre-school teachers and all who should be able to identify children who are at risk.

The Community Conferencing Team has also encountered serious obstacles in trying to engage the community in addressing issues of children and young people in trouble with the law. There were areas which were besieged by young people who had committed serious criminal acts and were released back to the community. The team tried to form an inter-sectoral team to think of ways of helping these youngsters.



The local leaders were invited to participate, but the reality is that people are scared to become involved in such matters.

We have not given up on young people in the community who have been in trouble with the law.

In the next months we will be targeting schools, police and youth clubs and educating them on using FGC in resolving issues with children. We are excited about this and we feel we will be able to report positive results in our next report.

Conclusion

From January 1998 to end of August 1998, the programme worked directly with a large number of families and some 140 children (not counting the youth impacted by the Community Conferencing component) and used about of R610 000. It would have cost the state a total of R1 600 000 in a period of 8 months to keep the number of children that we have serviced in an institution.

It is quite clear that Family Preservation has had successes in keeping families together. At the same time, working with high risk families in high risk environments is not easy. While emotionally challenging, when you see the end product, it is worth all the effort. Child care organisations and staff could take the opportunity to learn from these moving experiences, from the team as well as from families themselves. One need not necessarily implement all components as we did, but each has the ability to help families and youth at risk. There is still a long way to go nationally. We need to work hard at all levels to engage communities because their involvement is critical. The area of young people in trouble with the law is an emotional one for almost all families and communities and we have to face up to these challenges.

DCCA student **Kevin Green** chose the planning of a group activity for his practicum. The final event proved to be just a small part of the whole project.

Activity group Planning

A group activity can be any activity in which children engage with other children and/or with adults. It can be basically a time for fun and for the release of excess energy. But in a child care organisation a group activity is also planned around certain skill deficits and development needs of the group. It should be a holistic experience which involves the whole child and which offers concrete gains so that, as Erickson says, "the playing child advances to new stages of mastery."

Choosing activities, meeting needs

The energy put into planning group activities should focus on working on the types of problems the children experience, such as: difficulties with group participation, self-confidence, socialising, dealing with conflict and competition, awareness of others' needs and viewpoints, obeying rules, handling their own aggression. We can see that some of these are physical shortcomings like unfitness, clumsiness or poor eye-hand co-ordination; others can be perceptual or cognitive such as poor eyesight or concentration or not understanding the words and aims of a particular game; other problems may be emotional, like weak self-control, inability to lose, to take responsibility or share decision-making with others. So when we choose an activity, we try to include teaching and growth goals along with the basic pleasure of participation. The activities you choose will depend on the above, but also on the ages and ability levels of the children.

An activity should always be something which a child can actually do – or at least learn how to do quickly. We don't want to discourage children or worsen their problems!

With school-aged children who can manage these, common sports are often the best activities because they can be continued after leaving the institution, and a child will go out into the world with the shared "language" of soccer or netball or athletics.

Staff and organisational gains

Child and youth care workers should be aware of the advantages of well-planned activities not only for the children but also for themselves, as well as for the general physical and social environment. Groups of adolescents who have nothing constructive to do will soon become bored and destructive. There will be fighting, damage to property and bullying, and these things lead to increased staff-child conflict, general unhappiness, running away, and then staff burnout. Staff are also often unsure as to what they can do with children, and activities offer the opportunity to interact positively and constructively and to build relationships with children.

Aims

I chose for this practicum a soccer tournament. The aims of this were to plan a growth-producing activity for children which was appropriate to their general developmental needs. This would aim at some specific gains: in building up towards the tournament day there would be team-building, group cohesion, co-operation, leadership, belonging, and working relationships. The soccer itself would provide the natural play opportunity, the fun and excitement, constructive use of leisure time, the socialising and the enjoyment — and also the added experiences of learning more about the rules of the game, the strategies and techniques. Within these general and group goals we could fit many of the individual goals of particular children. For example, we would be able to link certain children with this wider project which would become a resource to the institution as a whole. Examples of some of the individual children we considered in this way: Child 1 is unable to commit to tasks. In a team would be able to share in the motivation of the team as a whole and benefit from their encouragement and reward. Child-2 is impulsive, cannot wait. Would learn to work towards a date in the future — it takes sustained work to build up a team with its skills and game plans for a tournament.

Child 5 loses temper when frustrated. A few yellow and red cards as part of the game can help him find a balance between acting out and enjoying his game.



Child 3 finds it hard to keep to rules. Soccer rules are strict, agreed to by all the team and enforced by a neutral referee. Child 4 resists co-operative work in groups; prefers to do things alone. Being a member of a team will build his dependence on others and reward his contribution to the group. Child 5 loses temper when frustrated. A few yellow and red cards as part of the game can help him find a balance between acting out and enjoying his game. Child 6: Clumsy, poor eye co-ordination. The tournament will include intensive skills training, for example, catching, kicking, passing.

The planning

Not everyone was going to be included in the actual soccer, but the event demanded an immense amount of planning and work of which all could be part. For example, we worked at finding a date (September 19 as it happened) which didn't interfere with exams, on which the field would be free and which was convenient for the other institutions we invited. Our list of duties was awesome: invitations, sponsors, tournament rules, finances, equipment (balls, flags, whistles, stopwatches, etc.), trophies, match officials, teas and refreshments, the complicated staff duty roster for the actual day ... Alongside all these arrangements was the training schedule, the coach, the early morning fitness runs, the child care workers being on hand at training sessions to support and encourage, and so on.

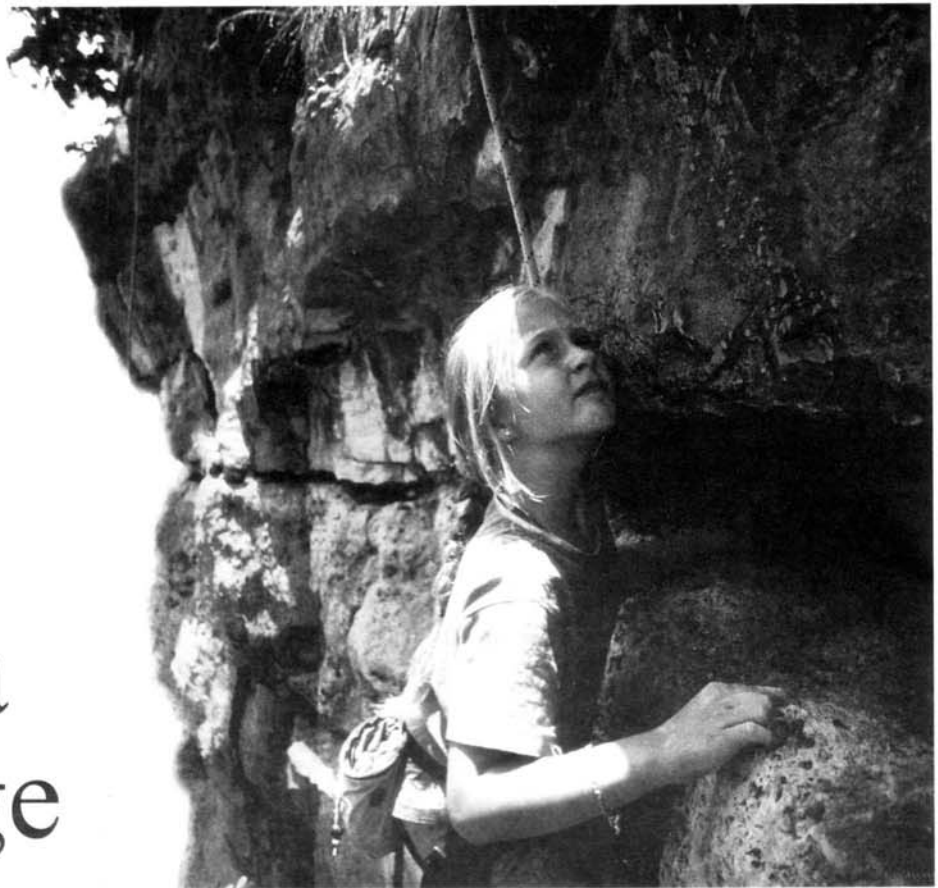
Evaluation

Our team lost the tournament! But that really wasn't so important. The soccer team itself worked very well together over the period and developed good relationships. This had a bleed-off effect into other areas of their lives, as well as into the institution as a whole — the tournament was a focus of interest and activity for the non-participants as well. We learned how to find and prepare the resources for whatever activities the children were involved in. A few things went wrong, The

transport bringing the tea lost its way and came an hour late to feed very hungry children. But there were no incidents of misbehaviour or upset on the day, and we gained many weeks of excited involvement and anticipation. And, whether it's to be a soccer tournament or a concert or a camping trip, we also learned a lot as to how to do something like this again next time.

Julian Rollins writes in *Family Life*: Climbing a rock face or pot-holing in the dark could be just the thing to give a timid child more confidence.

Why every child needs a challenge



Anyone who's stood at the edge of a sheer rock face, and looked over, knows the shiver of fear and sudden panic. Overcoming that fear, taking a giant step into the unknown and abseiling down the rock face is a defining moment. A moment to remember. For a nervous ten-year-old like David Smith, that moment can become the high point of the child's life. His mother Alison says: "In spite of the fact that he doesn't like heights, David had a go. He was very proud of his achievement and so were we."

Alison describes David as "slight for his age and short-sighted, not a 'sporty' boy". When, after seeing a school video, he decided to go on an activity weekend in the Shropshire countryside, Alison was surprised.

"I couldn't help thinking the activities were likely to trigger his asthma. I had to ask him again if he was sure he wanted to go, but he seemed certain." For Alison and her husband Andrew, David's first trip away from home in Derbyshire was a weekend of worry. "I spent the whole time expecting the phone to ring," she says. Since his weekend away last September, David has discovered a new confidence, which Alison believes is rooted in his pride at his achievements on the trip. "When he came back, I wanted to know about the food and accommodation, but he could re-

member very little of that. He wanted to tell us about the abseiling, the quad bikes and the canoes. He was exhausted, but delighted with all he had done.

Alison is now convinced that parents should overcome their anxieties and allow their children to be challenged. She believes the change in outlook soon brought changes in David's life. Within a few weeks, David, who had speech therapy during his early school career, had volunteered to read at a school event. "We were amazed, but very pleased," she says. He also became more robust in his attitude to other boys. "Before, he would have turned and run when other players ran at him during a football game. Now he'll get stuck in and tackle.

Children like David are often prepared to try challenging things, but parents' doubts and fears may end up limiting their child's horizons.

Doug Jones runs White Hall, an adventure centre in the Peak District, where children get the chance to have a go at a variety of sports, including caving and rock climbing. "The activities are challenging, but the children do rise to them, often surprising teachers and parents," he says. So when a child turns up at the centre with a note that says he or she cannot do one or other

The activities are challenging but the children do rise to them, often surprising teachers and parents.

activity, it is often the parent who is afraid, rather than the child.

"There's a tendency for parents to underestimate what their children can achieve," Doug Jones says. "We find that the parent will say of a child that he or she doesn't like the dark and can't go caving, but the child is actually very keen to have a try."

In some cases, nervous parents volunteer to join school groups so they can keep an eye on their child, he says. "When that happens, we try to put parent and child in separate groups." Children are often more ready to overcome their own doubts and have a go. "If somebody they trust is saying, 'Let's go and have a try', then younger children are more likely to do just that," he says.

Children need to take risks

Dr Michael Boulton of the University of Keele is a psychologist who specialises in the study of children's play. He is concerned that their opportunities for exciting play — especially during their junior school years — is now so severely limited that many youngsters miss out on the chance to learn how to deal with risk. "Children do need to take risks, both physical and social," he says.

"Climbing a tree is a good example. It is a risk that clearly has dangerous conse-

Why every child needs a challenge

quences and the child going up the tree is learning how to trust his or her own judgement — how high can I go?

But he or she is also learning how to deal with peer pressure. Friends on the ground are likely to be goading the child on, and he or she has to decide how to deal with that situation. Learning how to say no to your peers helps in other situations too — at some time in the future it may be that the peer group pressure is saying 'scratch that car' or 'steal those sweets'.

Climbing trees and running wild may have been part of Famous Five childhoods of the past, but for most of our children today organised 'adventure' under the watchful gaze of adults is the best — and only — alternative. "Faced with a physical challenge, such as abseiling, a child has to decide whether to rise to the challenge or give up," Dr Boulton says. "For most children, that can be a great learning opportunity; unconsciously, in other situations in life, they will make a similar choice, thinking, 'I'm not sure I can do this, but I'm going to have a go'."

For the usually passive child, rising to the challenge can be a great opportunity to present themselves to other children in a good light. "Having looked over the cliff edge and been frightened, like everybody else, but having still had a go, is a great confidence-builder."

The difficult decision for us as parents is how to gauge when a child is ready to face a challenge and get the best from it. "Children will benefit as long as they don't feel like failures," Dr Boulton says. "Asking a child to abseil off a cliff face when they've never even been allowed to look over a cliff is setting up a situation which will probably result in failure." Making the judgement for a 'passive' child may be more difficult.

Confidence

"Often a parent can misread a child's passivity. Yes, you have to respect their interests, but it may be that their reluctance to have a go is not because they don't want to, but because they lack the confidence," Dr Boulton says. Trying — and with luck, succeeding — may be just what's required.

Tim Jepson is a lecturer at the University of Wales, Bangor, who trains instructors for the outdoor activity industry. He believes that an outdoor adventure course is the perfect situation in which 'unsporty' children can discover new strengths. As parents, it's probably these children we are most likely to keep at home, believing they are not ready for the rough and tumble of the great outdoors. "Children often don't enjoy competitive school sport because of the aggression and the body con-

tact," he says. "Outdoor activities are very different, there's no need to compete."

Don't underestimate the quiet ones

Faced with a new activity, such as climbing or canoeing, children who do not like more traditional sports can find new strengths. "Often you find that as the group faces a new activity, the existing hierarchy breaks down. Quieter children find they can master their nerves and have a go."

Tim Jepson has two daughters, aged nine and eleven. He feels quite strongly that parents need to give girls the same opportunities for adventure as boys. "Boys often invent their own adventures — they build dens and go cycling, but parents often assume that girls are not, or should not be, interested," he says. Lynn McTeer was in two minds about sending her daughter Stevie, then aged nine, on an adventure week organised by her school at Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire. "They go every year and her brother, who is older and more outgoing, had been and enjoyed it," Lynn says. "But I felt Stevie wasn't ready, not because of any worries about the activities, but because I thought she wasn't ready to be away from home."

A year later Stevie did join the adventurers, spending five days away in the Wye Valley. She tried a range of activities, including fencing, canoeing and abseiling, and in spite of her mother's concerns, she really enjoyed it. "I was a bit worried because she's not the sporty type, but she seemed really elated by the experience," says Lynn.

"When we got her home it all came pouring out. What she'd done and achieved. She seemed to want to describe how it all happened. But when she'd finished she just went up to her room and burst into tears — I think it was the disappointment of being back home." Since her holiday, Stevie has been more independent, Lynn says. "I think she has grown up quite a bit, although whether that's simply being away from home or whether it's the activities is hard to say." "It would be naive to believe every child who goes out and tries a challenging activity is changed," says Tim Jepson. "But if you capture a child's imagination and challenge him or her then they can take that away and use the experience at some time in the future. The idea of 'character building' is as valid now as it ever has been. It is a phrase that comes with historical baggage — it conjures up an image of cold baths and early mornings. But if you offer children the opportunity to test themselves, then you are giving them a chance to build character."

Fact FILE

Where to learn

A skills training course in outdoor and adventure training for child and youth care workers.

EDUCO South Africa is offering a five-day training experience for child care workers who would like to learn leadership skills in this field.

The following wilderness skills will be covered:

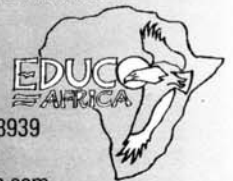
- Camp management and safety
- Mountain hiking
- Sequencing of activities
- Map and compass work
- Story-telling
- Introduction to rock climbing
- Team and trust initiatives
- A wilderness first-aid kit
- Facilitation skills

These course will be offered as follows:
KwaZulu Natal Region: 16 to 20 April
Western Cape Region: 1 to 5 May

The cost, inclusive of training material, accommodation and food will be R200 for the five-day period. Current members of the NACCW will get a 20% discount.

INFORMATION

Educo Africa
Telephone (021) 761-8939
Fax (021) 797-5292
e-mail: educos@iafrica.com



"Children often don't enjoy competitive school sport because of the aggression and the body contact. "Outdoor activities are very different, there's no need to compete."



"It's alright, son. Look, it's only a tree. Just a tree."



1999 PRACTICE THEME: ENGAGING

Connecting kids with their world



Kathy Scott said recently "At James House here in Hout Bay we try to give the children nothing that they can't take with them when they leave."

In child care practice today, we don't help children to manage in their own worlds if we have provided resources and material goods which don't exist for them back home. Instead, we offer "portable" gains, "take-away" skills, and ideas which will work in their world.

In our engaging with children we try to give them the ability to establish and enjoy positive relationships to replace the hurt and mistrust of the past — so that they can leave us with trust and self-confidence.

But engaging also means connecting kids to the universal things they will find in life and which are available to all of us — fun, games, sports, sea, mountains, walks ... *and ideas and knowledge.*

Individual me

One of the things which makes us secure and self-contained individuals is the fact that we have certain interests and abilities which we can learn about and devote our time and energy to. Isn't it true that many of your friends are characterised by such pursuits — they are good at fishing or gardening or movies or at playing the guitar. These interests and pas-

times are there for everyone — no limits or exclusions. I am known for the music I love, my son for his golf, a friend for his ability to fix motor cars and another for his jokes! Certainly one of the gifts we can give to the children we work with — something they can take away with them when they leave — is some experience and knowledge of the "free stuff" in the world.

Our pessimism?

Is it possibly a sign of our own tendency to expect the worst that we offer all those cliché skills to troubled children — conflict resolution, problem solving, anger management, self-defence ... ? I wonder how necessary those things would be if we offered them experience in sailing, vegetable growing, soccer, playing bongo drums like these kids on the left here, or fixing bikes.

Down below on the right of this page (have a look) an inspired child care worker has taken a couple of kids and let them loose amongst the rock pools on the beach. One of these kids may develop a lifetime interest in fishing, the other may be longing to get home for tea!

At the top of the page some brilliant father has delivered two children by truck to the open spaces of the countryside: one may become a committed amateur botanist or entomologist (what's that?!) and the other may simply come to love the feel of the wind blowing in her hair.

And all of this is free. There is no entrance charge, no age restriction. All we have to do is take the trouble to expose our children to these things which can entertain and absorb them today — and for the rest of their lives. In many cases these pastimes can be the

things which help them through troubled marriages and job crises, through free weekends and empty afternoons.

Your plan

As a child care worker you must share the responsibility for this with the children themselves. If you talk with them you will discover things which you never suspected, that this one can sew beautifully and this one loves fishing; that this one knows all there is to know about pop music, and this one can cook up a mean toffee! When you find out the things they like (or, with deprived children it may be the things they think they may like and would like to try) your task is to offer opportunities. That's all. "Seeing you like fishing, let's go down to the river on Sunday," or "I'm off to the library this afternoon — who's coming?" In a larger children's organisation it is a good idea to collect information about "who likes what" more systematically, and then the staff team can share out the activities they would like to offer. In most cases you will find that certain staff members also like cricket or climbing or sleeping in the sun, and this brings them closer to the children who share these interests.

Many troubled kids haven't had the opportunity to connect to their world. Either their lives have been very deprived (I once met a ten-year-old child in Woodstock — half a mile from Woodstock beach — who had never seen the sea!) or their families have been pre-occupied by poverty or conflict or unhappiness and they have been locked into the family problems. For these kids we must *create* opportunities to develop interests and connections. We take the trouble to say "Who would like a walk over the hill before tea?" or "I'm going to see the start of the race on Saturday — who would like to come along?"

You never know. You may start something which will last some youngster a lifetime. You may connect him to some interest through which he will grow wings and fly to heights beyond both of your hopes and dreams. Just engage!



This is the concluding part of a paper presented by **Fr Patrick Shanahan** at a recent seminar on children at the University of Zimbabwe

THE ALTERNATIVE AFRICA: STREET CHILDREN IN GHANA

Rights, Needs and Survival Strategies

All of us surely agree that children's rights are important. Likewise, we would agree that the most important right of a child is to be a child, to have adults take responsibility for you until you can reasonably take it for yourself.

Officially, according to both the United Nations and the Constitution of the Fourth Republic of Ghana, Kwame is a child. He is under 18. Comfort is a child. Clearly her baby is a new child. Of the three, only Comfort's baby fits into our nice neat statement that the most important right of a child is to be a child. The other two, in all respects except emotional vulnerability, are not children any more. They are small young street people. The new culture that they are in demands that they leapfrog from "very young child" to "adult" with virtually no steps on the way. That is part of the new tribal land which is a street, a slum, a dungheap, a shanty town.

Right to be a street child

At this stage I would like to raise something that I think will be controversial. I bring it up not to be controversial but because, in my own development with the children whose lives I have shared in for the last 10 years, I have reached a point beyond which I cannot go at present. I wish to state that every street child has the right to be a street child.

Paradoxically, let's go back to the village. Kwame in his village had the right, and exercised this right, to be a village child. He went farming in due season. He hunted in due season. He learned to dance according to festival and tradition. He ate as he was bidden. His sister carried the water in the morning. He swept the compound. Nobody disagrees with that. Everybody says: "But that is plainly obvious."

So, why is it that when we come to look at the street children in our cities we do not accord them the same respect, and say they have the right to be street children? To sleep in their recognised areas? To eat on the same street corner? To work in the same jobs? To hustle? To survive! If I say to a street child "I am trying very hard to ensure that I respect you every day", I am really saying "you have the right to be on that corner", because if he or she hasn't that right, then what am respecting? A fraud? A fake? Or a real, young child?

I have no wish to stifle the debate with the semantics of rights and duties, but I do have to repeat that if I wish to follow the example of Ndugu in Kenya and offer love, care, affection and respect for each child, then at this point in my life I am saying that a street child has the right to be just that. This experience of the right of street children automatically makes me flexible in my approach to them.

Health needs

81% of all children met by our workers on the streets are illiterate or semi-literate. Most street children we meet are amazingly self-contained. All street children need to eat, wash, use toilet facilities and buy sufficient articles of clothing. This leads me to say that street children need a chance to become literate, a chance to hustle and work rather than beg, and the opportunity to have a safe, dry place in which to sleep. There is one need, however, that is paramount. Our ex-

perience shows that a street child is most vulnerable and in greatest need when he or she is sick. So, I would like to talk about the health strategies that we are currently trying to employ on the streets of Accra.

We realised that street children, like all poor people in Accra, self-medicate. If the Structural Adjustment demanded by the World Bank and the IMF has done anything in the health sector, it has been to force the poorest to avoid proper medical care. You can't have a cash-and-carry system if you haven't enough cash.

We also realised that our street children were suffering from all the normal sicknesses, so in order of importance they catch malaria often, and have respiratory and diarrhoeal diseases. They also have, in Accra at present, a high incidence rate of STDs. Of HIV and AIDS I am not in a position to comment. We started our own very *ad hoc* health post in a tiny room in one of our Refuges, but as of 1998 I can report that we have a mobile health unit run by the Salvation Army of Ghana in close collaboration with ourselves.

Survival

Ghana is a very peaceful place. Ghanaians, as we have seen on the international stage, are very gifted in both making peace and in keeping it. Ghanaians prefer palaver (talk) to physical violence. A discussion forum would be called a *durbar* in Ghana, a word imported by the colonialists from India to describe a traditional phenomenon they found in the villages. There everybody, from a chief and his linguist to the lowliest inhabitant, sat in a circle and once you sat in the circle you had the right to speak. Everybody exercised that right. On the street it is different. I sometimes call it "South Bronx comes to Africa". On the street you hit first, and possibly discuss afterwards. The basic survival strategy for every street child is to ensure that you are strong and physically rough and tough. The worst



THE ALTERNATIVE AFRICA: STREET CHILDREN IN ACCRA, GHANA

fight I have ever seen on the streets was between two 14-year-old boys who fought each other with broken bottles over 200 cedis (a few cents) — payment for a cleaning job done in one of the markets.

Street children are not hard in the almost effete macho sense of the word, but in the dog-eat-dog sense. Kwame today will hit a smaller child to show power, rank, dominance — almost by way of introducing that child to the street — because Kwame, you can be sure, was bounced against the wall many times when he first came to Accra.

The street child borrows from his old cultural practices. There is territory for both work and sleeping. There is the continuation of the clan idea which can stem from similarity of job or location. And there is the need for relationships with both girls and boys which can make up in large part for the times when they are emotionally weak, particularly when they are sick.

The girl children have to adopt extra survival strategies. Once the age of puberty has been reached many of them will have boy minders who will demand sexual favours as payment for protection. Many small girls will use sex for survival in terms of supplementing their income. It is too easy to call them prostitutes. A prostitute is for me a professional sex worker. A 14-year old who offers sex for food and a few shillings to buy a length of cloth is not a prostitute. It is our experience that the girls, unlike the boys, always live and operate from within a group. These groups have strong hierarchical structures which cannot be ignored. The most important element for survival in terms of a child maintaining some form of balance is the fact that in Accra at present almost every street child hustles and works to survive. We have not yet got to the stage where the majority of children on the street sit around all day doing nothing with their vast quantities of energy left to simmer. Our experience at present is just the opposite and that is another vital factor for us to take on board.

Challenges: national and local

Can we answer one question! Do we adopt the ostrich attitude and pretend that street children do not pose a problem for our continent, or do we accept the reality and live with them?

It is easy for us as social scientists to say that children are the makers of their own development; to say that they are not objects, but that they are subjects; to say that we must listen to children. It is easy to criticise social workers on the streets of our cities and say that they rarely ask the children about their lives. The reality is that most of us never bother to ask any child in Africa anything about their own development. If a child in a village has never been asked what he or she thinks about an issue for development you can be sure that the child on the city street is even



less likely to get a hearing. The pretence is to talk about child participation. The reality is actually to work in the urban slum and respect the child enough to take on board the ideas he or she has.

I would like to say two things about governmental strategies in Ghana in relation to the children. Perhaps they will be of some assistance when you consider the situation in other countries.

The first point concerns the strategy on the national level. In 1996 the Government of Ghana successfully trained 30 young social workers in its School of Social Work in Accra, to the basic level of a Diploma. Our own agencies approached the Government and asked if ten of them could be seconded to us with pay to work on the streets alongside the children. We were told that it was impossible — none of the 30 was able to be employed by the Government due to the IMF regulations concerning public sector employment according to the rules of the current Structural Adjustment Programme in operation in the country. Cynically you could say that the IMF and the World Bank had faithfully followed one of the apostles of monetarism, Hayek, who considered social welfare to be nothing more than "a semantic fraud". In reality the Government of Ghana was powerless. It is far too easy for people to ask "What is your Government doing?" when that same Government is unable to provide young, committed workers for its own street children. Today our two agencies employ 17 of the 30 with no help from anyone, least of all the IMF. Unless and until the Governments of this continent are allowed to treat social welfare as a necessary part of public spending and public commitment then Ghana's example will go on being multiplied. I must, however, report that on a national level some of the inertia we experience is not the fault of Structural Adjustment or lack of public spending. In November 1995 we were party to

the preparation of a document called *Street Children in Ghana: Policy Framework*, presented to Government through the Department of Social Welfare. Now, at the end of March 1998, this document is still called a draft document. It has no teeth. It cannot be used to stir other departments into action.

On local levels there is much suspicion about street children. I have been called by one of the District Chief Executives in Accra "the priest who has brought criminals to the area" when describing the work of our Refuge. The "criminals" are, of course, street children. The blame for such a mentality lies with both of us: on the man in question for his intransigence in accepting that there is a problem and that it is here to stay on his streets, and on myself and my workers for losing patience in trying to open his mind to the fact that these children need the care and friendship of committed adults.

What we find on a daily basis is that the local government is failing to give us the space to try and reinvent facilities for street children, though this would in fact cost them nothing to implement. One of the striking features of the Ndugu Society in Kenya was its ability at an early stage to persuade the then Minister of Education that its alternative schools were not a threat but the only means to offer literacy to children. We have a close relationship with the Mayor of Accra and from the beginning we have acknowledged that he has no money to help us pay wages but that he does have political power, and at times he has used that in favour of street children. The first creches for street babies in the city were built on an illegal site on the edge of a shanty. They became illegally "legal". Openness of mind which allows the child's rights to be considered will, as I have said, always lead to flexibility. I suppose on the question of education and health I would classify myself as an old disciple of Ivan Illich. But in order to make use of street corner literacy, street corner health posts and street corner creches for street babies, we need political permission. In my dreams I imagine the Government of Ghana giving me five years of complete freedom in order to make alliances with the street children and so form policies that will help all of us to care together. In this same dream I ask the Government to judge after five years in the full knowledge that the street children would have persuaded all of us to reinvent our approaches to them. For ourselves at CAS and SAID, we are advocates who act for the well-being of street children. This means that we see our work as completely street based. It is not my place in this paper to start a discussion about agencies around the world who work with street children through a more institutional approach. Our workers are on the streets every day, all the time, with one thing in mind: to meet and talk and greet and, where possible, become friends with the children of that street corner.

It is only then that all the wonderful theories of participatory development can become reality. We have a Sponsorship Scheme in place for those children who wish to leave the streets. As I write I would have to say that only about 2% of all the children we live with take advantage of it. For us, no street worker means no agency for those children. It is very hard and very demanding, and our own young Ghanaian Social Workers, trained and untrained, put us to shame.

Publishers and literacy

The Zimbabwe National Book Fair 1998 is about to be launched, and my last point in this section is addressed to this event. I have mentioned Ivan Illich above. One of his great ideas was to promote the need to have street corner classrooms and street corner health facilities. I would like to reinvent him and say that the real need we have in Ghana is for street corner literacy programmes for our children and young people. We have a whole new generation of illiterates growing up in our towns and cities. Economic constraints ensure that free universal compulsory schooling is not rushing to meet us. We need desperately to ensure that our young children receive the opportunity to acquire basic literacy skills. The challenge to publishers is to come up with innovative material to enable our social workers to start street corner literacy groups. Is this the time to revert to the comic? Is there a need for the comic strip as well as the comic story? Can you give us age-appropriate subject matter in simple language in comic form? Can you ensure fast, affordable publication? You have a huge market out there. In a few years half our population will live in towns and cities. At the same time half our population will be under the age of 16. In Ghana that will mean that the illiteracy rate amongst children and young people in the poorest parts of our cities will be enormous. It is pointless to train young social workers to start street corner literacy classes if they have absolutely no material with which to work. But the challenge from me isn't just the challenge to publishers. It is to the publishers and to the education authorities in our cities. The great strength of Ndugu in Kenya is that it was allowed to set up an alternative system for the poorest illiterate children in the shanties and on the streets. The authorities didn't get in the way. They didn't fall into the trap of saying that the Ndugu schools are second class. They didn't try to hinder the work by saying that you can't introduce literacy and skill without a properly appointed school building. My contention is that if the publishers would give young social work prac-

tioners good material to use on our streets, all of us could re-educate our education authorities into letting us properly experiment with literacy. We are finding such an intervention very difficult in Accra because of the lack of any affordable simple reading material.

Conclusion

Both Arnold Grol and Fabio Dalappe taught us from Nairobi that we have to show affection, care, service and love in our dealings with street children. I would like to steal an idea from Judith Ennew. In *The Handbook of Children's Rights*, edited by Bob Franklin (Routledge 1995), she wrote a piece which contained a section entitled *The Unwritten Rights of Street Children* (pp 210-213). In the same year a small organisation in France, called Repper, produced the *Charter of Rufisque* (Senegal) for street children. Repper allowed me to translate this Charter. I am including (Fact File, right) its ten propositions because I think they match what all of us are searching for when we try to follow Arnold Grol in loving the children of our streets.

This Charter was proposed by a young man called Francois Lefort. You may disagree with some of the things he proposes. I know that I do. But I think in the main they are rules of conduct for all of us to use when we offer to walk the streets with our children. Finally, Lefort says to each child, and I translate: "If you are serious about your life you will be loved. If you are not serious about your life you will be loved all the same."

Photographs: Acknowledgements to the Undugu Society, Kenya

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Fact FILE

THE 10 PROPOSITIONS of the Charter of Rufisque

1. The street child must be regarded as a child, not as a delinquent or an anti-social being, or as someone who is sick.
2. Every adult must first listen to the child to hear what he or she wants before speaking. The role of the adult is to help the child make the distinction between dream and reality.
3. It is the street children themselves who decide what concerns them both individually or as a group.
4. The adult makes a simple contract with the child. This contract must be scrupulously guarded: it is a basic necessity, not to lie to the child.
5. Whenever it is possible, the first principle must be to help the child reunite fully with his or her family.
6. When we find a foster home for a child we must ensure that it is not so luxurious as to make him or her forget what conditions he or she must face in adulthood.
7. Large institutions are not the answers for street children.
8. We must attach great importance to making sure that street children preserve the values of the streets. Values such as strong will; the ability to make do in every situation; the spirit of initiative; the sense of community with other children.
9. The street child must be brought up in the beliefs of his or her parents or family. All forms of proselytism are forbidden.
10. The street child must know that from the first encounter with one of our workers we will never abandon him or her.

This Charter was proposed by a young man called Francois Lefort. I think in the main they are rules of conduct for all of us to use when we offer to walk the streets with our children.

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The mornings are icy in the desert scrubland outside Phoenix, and Christopher Gingerich's hands shake with cold as he eats a meagre breakfast in his tent. A single overhead heater barely penetrates the frigid air, while thin prison clothes offer scant warmth for Gingerich, 16, and his fellow teenagers as they huddle together eating a slop of powdered eggs. Dressed in black and white stripes with lurid pink undergarments protruding from short sleeves, they look almost comical. But there is no laughter from the group of solitary campers. Last month they became the first juveniles in America forced into a tented jail. Soon they could become the first to form a chain gang.

No tolerance

"The cold nights are just the start," said Gingerich, after his dawn ritual of exercise followed by a freezing shower. "There's no tolerance in here. You make one mistake and they lock you up 23 hours a day. Then it's the chain gang." So far only four teenagers have broken the rules, but others will doubtless follow.

Those who want to avoid permanent "lockdown" will be required to shackle themselves together and work for 30 days to earn the right to move back to the tents. It is not much of a choice.

"The sheriff wants us out there sweeping the streets in chains — and he gets what he wants," said Andrew Mendoza, 15, one of those already confined to a tiny cell for assaulting a fellow inmate. "I'll certainly volunteer when the time comes." He was not yet aware that one weekly task, currently undertaken by the adult chain gangs, may be to bury the city's indigent dead.

Serious crimes

The crimes committed by these young prisoners range from attempted murder to burglary and from rape to sexual assault. But most would say their biggest mistake was to commit a felony in the jurisdiction of Joe Arpaio, known as the meanest sheriff in America. He has justifiably earned the title. Sheriff Arpaio, 66, who runs the third largest sheriff's office in the country, operates on a simple philosophy: no one should live better in prison than they do outside.

His tent cities were set up in 1993 to save money and relieve the crowded jails. First there were 1 200 men. Then came 200 women — and now the first batch of juveniles.

"I could say that what I do is all about saving taxpayers' money," he said. "But this is about punishment. I want juveniles who commit crimes to realise that they will be treated no differently from adults."



Sheriff Arpaio, who runs this tent-jail for teens in Phoenix, Arizona, "should win the Nobel Peace Prize for cruelty."

Hard Times

Sheriff Arpaio's methods are legendary. He already runs the only female chain gang in the country. The introduction of pink underwear, ostensibly to prevent the theft of prison-issue clothing, was also another means to embarrass the young inmates.

Like their adult counterparts, the teenage criminals must pay \$1 towards a daily menu based on baloney — a cheap meat that turns green with age. Coffee, cigarettes and pornographic magazines, the staples of almost every American and British jail, are banned. Other luxuries and entertainment are equally scarce. Donald Duck cartoons, Lassie films and a weather channel are broadcast on a single television set.

School cabins

The only concession to age is a series of portable buildings in which the young prisoners spend at least four hours a day. Known as Hard Knocks High, the cabins offer education to high school standard. The sheriff also provides computers and desks. Outside there are no such frills. German shepherd dogs equipped with collar cameras patrol the area 24 hours a day to ensure that no one leaves his tent without authorisation. The sheriff even proudly assures visitors that he spends more each day on dog meat than he does on prison food. He constantly courts controversy and his pris-

oners have filed at least 800 civil suits against him over alleged use of excessive force by guards at his prisons.

Made possible by state legislation that allows 14 to 17-year-olds to be convicted as adults,

the first juvenile tents have once again provoked fierce protests from civil rights activists. Amnesty International claims Sheriff Arpaio's draconian justice merits a "Nobel prize" for cruelty.

Despite his claim that his county's rate of recidivism is at least three percent less than the national average, detractors are convinced the teen tents will backfire.

"The more repressive you get with juveniles, the more you reverse the process of rehabilitation," said Malcolm Klein, a professor of sociology at the University of Southern California. "If he wants to create monsters he's probably on his way to doing it."

Sheriff Arpaio, a former federal agent who was part of drug-busting operations under President Richard Nixon, ignores the criticism. At least 90% of the voters of Maricopa County have elected him twice. His Wild

West justice has proved hugely popular among the citizens of Phoenix. Regular volunteer posses — of which there are more than 50 — patrol the county on horses, Harley-Davidson motorbikes and even in helicopters, arresting prostitutes, drug dealers and petty criminals.

Ask the parents

Sitting in his Phoenix office, the sheriff revelled in his latest gambit to combat a rising trend in juvenile crime. It gave the sheriff an opportunity to avoid questions concerning a new scandal: the state district attorney has launched an inquiry into allegations that his office employed "Gestapo tactics", false witness statements, threats and bribery in a campaign to squelch internal critics.

"It's all rubbish," Sheriff Arpaio said. "People set you up and then they try to knock you down. Ask the parents of these young criminals what they think."

Kim Gingerich has yet to visit her son in the tent city. She is convinced Christopher is without hope of rehabilitation.

"I just hope these tents are bad enough, I really do," she said. "I can't bear to see him suffer, but CJ's been outsmarting the system for so long, it's what he needs."

— Tom Rhodes, *Times Newspapers, London*

I'm glad to be with you and I appreciate this invitation both as the Minister for Welfare and Population Development, and as the Chairperson of the IMC on Young People at Risk. This has been a mutual goal for many years in this country, some of whom are here today and it's great to be here as this long time vision becomes a reality!

Our children and youth are our greatest asset and strength and this degree in Child & Youth Care and Youth Work gives recognition to that fact. The establishment and launch of the degree gives a message to South Africa and the international community, that our children and youth matter, and our children and youth at risk deserve competent intervention and support. And so while indeed the degree is essentially aimed at the development of child and youth care workers and youth workers, and at the development of those two professions, it is not they who are the centre of attention here — but the children and youth of our country.

Thousands of children

I congratulate you on your efforts and achievement here today. An achievement that will I am sure be an important component in assisting with the transformation of the child and youth care system, and the wider transformation of our country. It will also make its mark over the years to come on many hundreds of Child and Youth Care Workers and Youth Workers and they in turn will affect the lives of thousands of children and youth. I want to say thank you to Technikon, NACCW and the SA Association of Youth Clubs in particular for the fact that you dreamed the dreams, you found consensus, you've established partnerships, and you've invested hard work and energy into making this happen.

You will be aware that for the past four years we have been working in this country on the transformation of the child and youth care system.

The reasons for the transformation are many, but the central one which is of importance today, is the fact that the system has not been effective. In too many instances, young people are not yet receiving the competent and quality of services they deserve from child and youth care workers, youth workers, and even social workers.

In too many instances young people are emotionally or physically hurt because child and youth care workers at a senior level are unable to provide the appropriate supervision and training to the staff teams, leaving poorly experienced and untrained workers dealing with large groups of children and youth, without the tools they need.

Those who work with children and youth in South Africa, particularly those at risk, have not (other than a

The B.Tech degree

On the 15th February the new degree course in Child and Youth Development (offered in both Youthwork and in Child and Youth Care Work) was inaugurated in Johannesburg. Guest-Speaker was the Minister of Welfare and Population Development, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi

course at UNISA for CYCW's which has now closed, and a course at Wits for Youth Workers) had the opportunity to receive the level of tertiary education they have needed. In turn this has put children and youth at further risk.

While we recognise that not every child and youth care worker or youth worker will require a degree, we do know that many will —

- (a) so that they can take their place as equals in a multi-disciplinary team with other professionals,
- (b) so that they are able to take on senior

roles and deal with the more complex and troubled young people,

- (c) so that they might receive salaries on par with other equal professionals, and finally,
- (d) so that they have a career pathway to follow which has no ceiling to it.

Strong signals

Today as we launch this degree we acknowledge that we have achieved an important outcome in terms of both the transformation of the child and youth care system and the society in general because it strongly signals that (a) child and youth care work/youth work are important career options in South Africa, and that (b) youth workers, child and youth care workers, the professional associations, and the Technikon RSA, take the development, care and protection of children and youth seriously.

The child and youth care profession and the youth work profession, have played a critical role within South Africa for many decades, but not always been formally recognised through job opportunities and tertiary education for what they contribute to the lives of young people, and for the important role they can play in the reconstruction, development and transformation of South Africa. I want to clearly say to you that this has changed and that it will change even more positively in the future. The establishing of the Youth Commission, the ratifying of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the transformation of the child and youth care system, and now the comprehensive transformation of social welfare services clearly commit our country to a powerful and positive focus on the well-being of our children and youth.

Council

Towards the end of last year we passed new legislation on social welfare service personnel, providing now for a differentiated Council which will register and regulate the various professional groups, including child and youth care workers and youth workers, within the social welfare sector. I know that this is another dream for which you have fought and we now see the fruits of those labours. As from this year, child and youth care workers and youth workers will have their own profes-

sional board and their own representation on the Council. Furthermore, the new CORE for state officials provides for appointment on the basis of competencies at various levels and thus paves the way for child and youth care workers and youth workers to take up positions in the public service at a variety of levels, provided they have the necessary registration and qualification. Finally, by April this year we will phase in a new financing policy for social welfare services, which will facilitate that better quali-



fied child and youth care workers and youth workers can be employed in the NGO sector and can receive salaries which are more closely aligned with their public service counterparts.

All of these advances, makes this degree and the various exit levels of certificate and diploma timeous and extremely appropriate.

Fourth year programme

It is indeed critical that we have child and youth work and youth work as recognised disciplines, that we have posts for child and youth care workers and youth workers in both government and non-government organisations (particularly in the welfare, education, health, and justice sectors), and that formal and informal education programmes are maintained or established for child care workers and youth workers at post matric, graduate and post graduate levels.

Not only am I pleased about this development of a certificate, diploma and degree in child and youth care and youth work at Technikon RSA, but I am encouraged by the fact that you plan to have a 4th year programme which will enable a range of disciplines, such as social workers, probation officers, nurses, and teachers, who work with children and youth, to access specialised skill and knowledge. I know you are working on a Masters programme in Youth Work with the support of RMIT (Australia) and in turn, with support from CIDA, the IMC is in the process of establishing a Masters programme in child and youth care with the School of Child and Youth Care in Uvic, Canada and hopes, I know, to link the Technikon RSA. The 4th year and Masters are very important for much needed research in our country as well as for the development of a cadre of leaders in both youth work and child and youth care who can take forward the transformation into the new millennium.

Skill and knowledge

We know that we cannot hope to be effective in our work with children and youth unless we have developed ourselves to the point of mastering the necessary skill and knowledge. Thus in closing I want us to again remind ourselves that these courses which we set up are fundamentally about the children, youth and families we serve.

We need courses like this... BECAUSE of what our children, youth and families need from us in our country.

We have to recognise that we have many hurting and troubled children and youth in South Africa – on our streets, in our communities, in our residential care facilities. We have many who are disabled, thousands who are abused and neglected, and many thousands who have been and will be orphaned through HIV/AIDS. It is hoped that the training and experiences which you provide to students through these courses at Technikon RSA will



ensure that we have workers who can not only be individually competent, but who can deal effectively with these special issues in an integrated manner and within multi-disciplinary teams. We do not want specialists in dealing with various pathologies or problems, we want human developers. However, we cannot ignore special development areas, and thus we want education and training which makes it possible for service providers to integrate specialised knowledge within a developmental approach.

Our children and youth (and their families) must be enabled to heal, to find their strengths in the midst of their pain, to deal with the past effectively and without further violence and hurt, to have a sense of belonging and master. They must be reclaimed – and so what we are launching here today is a degree, a diploma and a certificate in reclaiming children, youth, families and communities.

Look back

In five years and ten years from now I want to challenge you to be able to look back and count the children, youth, families, and communities in whose lives you have brought about competence and well-being:

Firstly, through what you have taught the students who pass through your courses.

Secondly, through how you have taught the students.

Thirdly, through your own leadership, vision and constant awareness of those lives which are at the heart of setting up these courses in the first place – our children and youth.

I wish you well with all your endeavours and I would be glad to be kept informed of your progress. My Ministry and Department look forward to a continued partnership with you, as does the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk which I chair. Thank you again for what you are doing and will do for our children and youth, and for those who serve them.

It is with great pleasure that I launch this first ever South African Bachelors Degree in Child and Youth Care and Youth Work.

Report from the NACCW's Merle Allsopp

It has been said that our lives are made up of the days we inhabit. My child and youth care worker's heart and spirit will, I am sure, always look back on this day as one very specially inhabited and lived. For today is clearly, in the world of South African child and youth care, a very special day and one which is cause for celebration and thanksgiving. We are here to celebrate the efforts of Technikon SA in venturing (amidst a fair degree of opposition) to establish and give birth to the B. Tech: Child and Youth Development. We are here to celebrate the efforts of many NACCW members who over the years have recognised the training needs in the field and have supported the organisation in its efforts to establish tertiary level education.

People

We are here to celebrate and give thanks for the efforts of particular individuals for their commitment to young people at risk, most notably Minister Fraser-Moleketi and Lesley du Toit for their ongoing leadership in the field and their (dare I say tireless) pursuit of better services to children, youth and families.

We are here to give thanks to Professor de Bruyn for developing the Certificate in Child and Youth Care at UNISA and in such a stalwart manner pioneering the way for tertiary level training in child and youth care.

We are here to celebrate the partnership between Technikon SA and NACCW and to thank Hettie de Jong, MVS, Jackie Winfield and Zeni Thumbadoo for jointly taking us to the edge of the springboard of the B.Tech.

We are here to celebrate the collaboration between the fields of youth work and child and youth care work, and look forward to a future where we enrich this collaboration for the good of those who need our services.

We also acknowledge and celebrate the fact that this initiative provides one of the most critical opportunities for child and youth care in South Africa to move towards greater recognition and professional status.

And we celebrate the fact that many child and youth care workers, yearning for the opportunity to increase their skill and knowledge levels, will, with the introduction of the B.Tech, have the opportunity to do exactly that – become more able in their quest to assist challenging children and youth.

Life space work

We need to be very mindful of the essence of what we are here to celebrate. This is a step towards a "way of being", a methodology for working with young people, which is not restricted to a particular time or setting.

The 50-minute office-bound hour is not the kind of service that many relationship-reluctant children and youth will seek out and use. In order to be helpful with young people, we have to hone and refine our skills of being in their life-space, perceiving and building on strengths hidden in many an unappetising guise.

Many parents and professionals find themselves hopelessly and helplessly out of their depth when trying to help challenging youngsters — across a generation gap too wide to be bridged simply on the strength and knowledge gained from a few more years of life. The field of child and youth care has much to offer adults confronted by young people whose eyes and whose deeds tell the stories of their dislocated and disillusioned lives.

The time

The essence of what we celebrate here today has to do with the provision of better resources to children, youth and families, now, at this auspicious time in our country.

We are, in establishing this degree, equipping ourselves as a society with some of the basic building blocks needed to be useful in the lives of troubled and troublesome young people in an unstable world of exponentially increasing complexity and rapid change.

In training and educating people to work effectively with young people who challenge us and challenge society, we give effect to a human rights culture, one in which we do not incarcerate and relegate to the shadows those whose reaction to their circumstances is on the outer and dangerous edges of existence. These, I believe, are the real reasons for the significance of this day. The B-Tech in Child and Youth Development is a means to an end and not an end in itself.

A warning

But amidst the celebration I sound a warning. Whilst we have made every effort to ensure that the B.Tech will engage participants on both factual and analytic levels, and will also stimulate their imagination and creativity, it always devolves upon the individual to give effect to training and education in practice.

In order to be helpful to young people, we are required to be present as human beings in their lives; and challenging young people require the fullness of our presence.

It is our hope that we will be able to develop child and youth care workers who not only ask the questions *What should I do?* and *What should I be?* in relation to this work — but also ask and answer the question *How should I be?* with professionalism and confidence, in relation to difficult young people.

The passion and the spark that each worker puts into the quality of their interactions with youth will remain a personal responsibility. On this day of celebration and thanksgiving I encourage child and youth care workers in our

country to continue working with passion, and to come forward and avail themselves of the opportunity which the B.Tech in Child and Youth Development offers — to develop themselves, their skills and their knowledge base, and in so doing contribute to the development of our profession in South Africa.

From child and youth care professional Joyce Sigona

I am a child and youth care practitioner at Guild Cottage which is an NGO specialising in child sexual abuse. I am very excited by this launch of the B.Tech in Child and Youth Development — both for young people starting out and those like myself who have been in the profession for some time.

This day means support, encouragement and empowerment to those in our field. To me, the new degree course brings a recognition of the profession in its own right, which in past years has been hidden — in spite of so much good child and youth care work being carried out in our different community organisations like churches, settings for the disabled and other places for troubled children and youth. The B.Tech is going to develop the profession further and also make it more visible both nationally and internationally.

Personal challenge

In this profession one uses one's self as a tool, and therefore the gathering of skills and knowledge is essential. The Basic Qualification in Child Care (BQCC) run by NACCW and the Certificate in Child and Youth Care offered by UNISA/NACCW has motivated and empowered those working directly with children and youth in residential and community settings.

Such courses taught workers to develop helpful programmes which created positive moments each day for those we work with. The B.Tech is a dream come true.

The launch of the degree course today is also a challenge and it poses a number of expectations to those in the field. I see the B.Tech as an opportunity to extend my knowledge and skills in making my practice more supportive, encouraging and empowering to the children, youth and their families, especially when we are learning about new preventative programmes that enable children and youth to remain in their communities or family settings, and others that re-integrate children and youth into their families and communities.

The B.Tech will lead child and youth care workers towards meeting the demands of the new millennium with greater focus and impact. I would like to thank all those — Tecknikon SA, NACCW, UNISA and the SA Associations of Youth Clubs and Youth Workers — who contributed towards the building of this degree course in Child and Youth Care Development.

Subjects in Child and Youth Development : Child and Youth Care National Diploma (3 years) and B.Tech (4 years)

Year 3: Exit level – National Diploma

Child and youth Care III
Applied Development for CYC & YOUTHWORK III

Two choices from specialisation:

- Youth Justice/Probation I
- CYC/YOUTHWORK in Residential & Secure Care I
- CYC/YOUTHWORK: Disabilities in Young People I
- Early Childhood Care & Education
- CYC/YOUTHWORK: Schools & After-School Care
- Detached CYC/YOUTHWORK Work I
- CYC/YOUTHWORK Administration & Management I
- Gender & Youth Development I
- Peace Education & Conflict-resolution I
- Health: Young people & Families I
- Child Abuse & Child Rights I

Year 4: Exit level – B. Tech Degree

Child and Youth Care IV
Applied Development for CYC & YOUTHWORK IV
Research Methodology for CYC & YOUTHWORK

Two choices from Specialisation:

- Youth Justice/Probation II
- CYC/YOUTHWORK in Residential & Secure Care II
- CYC/YOUTHWORK: Disabilities in Young People II
- Early Childhood Care & Education II
- CYC/YOUTHWORK: School & After School Care II
- Detached CYC/YOUTHWORK Work II
- CYC/YOUTHWORK Administration & Management II
- Gender & Youth Development II

BRIEF REPORT

Child and youth care workers in the school environment

The Aryan Benevolent Home is situated within the Chatsworth area and caters for the needs of 104 troubled youth and children.

During 1998 there was an increasing demand from school staff for support from the child care staff in managing children and youth with severe behavioural problems and academic underachievement. The co-operation which developed between child and youth care workers and school staff is now regular and ongoing. However, this required careful planning and implementation. The idea of involving such workers within the school environment was recommended to school staff at discussions which highlighted and clarified the role and functions of child and youth care workers. Hence, there was a positive point of departure to the programme.

The programme was aimed at a target group of ten children, ages varying from 6-12 years, at a primary school. The target group was identified by the school staff as requiring immediate support. Child care workers offered to provide three hours per day over a period of two months and to be followed by an evaluation with children, the child care and the school staff.

Findings

The children involved in the programme were interviewed individually and 60% of them said that they experienced the role of the child and youth care worker as supportive. Further, they felt comfortable sharing their difficulties with these staff as compared with the teacher whom they perceived as more authoritative and easily frustrated. At the same time, 40% of the children indicated that they were embarrassed and felt labelled due to the child and youth care worker involvement in the classroom. They suggested that these staff should be made accessible to the entire class, thereby removing the "children's home" child stigma.

Continued on next page ...

The programme has been a positive learning experience for both child care and teaching staff. It is clear that the role of the child and youth care worker in the school environment can enhance the ability of children and youth to achieve scholastic, development and therapeutic goals.



Overseas View

I am a Child and Youth Worker who is working in the school system and have just completed an art program with a Grade 7 class. This project involved making masks, formed to their face (this took one day), the next week we painted them. I asked the kids to think very carefully about what they wanted the different colours to represent. The idea was to have them personalize their masks further with colours representing the different aspects of themselves that they have a difficult time to verbalize. The following week they brought in different items that they further decorated the masks with. These items were to represent alues, important happenings, family, interests etc. It was wonderful to see how completely different each mask was. Each student described their mask to me and 10 out of the class stood up and described symbolic meaning to the rest of the class. This exercise in itself proved very therapeutic for those involved as they had an opportunity to explain something important about themselves. I took this opportunity further by picking out different students in the class, some with esteem issues, to take part in a drama presentation. I used the reading of 'The Masks' (not too sure if there is an actual title to it.) It starts out 'Don't be fooled by me, don't be fooled by the face I wear ...

I broke this reading up into 3 reading parts. I worked with the 3 readers to get them to dramatize the words.

Each reader has a mime who uses body language to interpret the words. The mimes will have their masks on during the presentation. One of the students plays the piano, so we have a music piece to start the production. Another of the students is very athletic so we were able to bring in another dimension to our production as they bring the mimes to life. Three other students from the class are doing a backdrop for the presentation to the school. For a short piece of drama it has turned out to be a tremendous opportunity for many students in this class to give expression to them.

The Presentation will be held next week.

Five of the students are going to tell the meaning of their masks and the backdrop will include all the masks made by the class. They will later be seen in a display case. It has been very interesting and revealing for me as I work with these students. For some the experience is

extremely beneficial as they struggle with expression of themselves. The esteem building is a 'happening'. The local Community papers have been called and are coming out to view the presentation. The students involved in the drama part have also invited their parents. I will be video taping this event as well. Hope this happening, gives you some ideas. Let me know if you need the reading.

Carolynn McCully

A posting on CYC-NET on 9 February



The care workers indicated that they experience recognition as full members of the team. Further, they viewed working within the life-space of the child in the school milieu as an exciting and challenging venture. They felt that they were able consistently to address the children's developmental and academic tasks and needs, thereby building their competency and thus enhancing each child's self-esteem. The child and youth care workers shared that the majority of the children involved in the programme felt supported and experienced them as being sensitive to their needs, whereas a few children reflected some discomfort but were nevertheless co-operative.

According to school staff, behavioural changes were noted in those children involved in the programme. Specifically, they became more attentive during lessons, they completed tasks, there were fewer hitting out behaviours, their tendency to leave the classroom frequently was reduced, there was far less truancy from school, and they made an effort to be more responsible about their homework and care for stationery.

The school staff indicated that the role of the child and youth care worker had provided for modelling of behaviour management and other intervention as well as creating an awareness of the non-academic needs of students. Hence the school staff viewed the involvement of child care workers as supportive and complementing their role as educators.

After school hours

The programme has created an awareness within the community, and parents have reached out to the children's home for guidance and support in relation to their children. They have also suggested the idea of extra-curricular activities after school hours and during school holidays.

The programme has been a positive learning experience for both child care and teaching staff. It is clear that the role of the child and youth care worker in the school environment can enhance the ability of children and youth to achieve scholastic, developmental and therapeutic goals.



Are there other uncommon settings — such as community organisations, hospitals — in which child and youth care workers use their particular skills? We would like to hear of them.



GOOD MENTAL HEALTH FOR Child Care Workers

TEN COMMANDMENTS

Thou shalt not be perfect — or try to be

Thou shalt not try to be all things to all people

Thou shalt occasionally leave undone things that ought to be done

Thou shalt not spread thyself too thin

Thou shalt learn to say no when it is best for you

Thou shalt schedule time for thyself alone

Thou shalt switch off and do nothing at regular intervals

Thou shalt be boring, inelegant and untidy at times

Thou shalt not even feel guilty

Especially thou shalt not be thine own worst enemy, but be thine own best friend

— MICHAEL GAFFLEY



Masihambeni into the new millennium

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHILD CARE WORKERS

Twelfth Biennial Conference

SA TECHNIKON CONFERENCE CENTRE, 2 VINTON ROAD,
ORMONDE EXT 1, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

5, 6 and 7 JULY 1999

CONFERENCE FEE

Full Three Days: Individual members of NACCW: R330.00
Non-members: R440.00 (Members receive a 25% discount)
The above includes lunch, teas and cocktail party (cash bar)

Daily Rate: Individual members of NACCW: R120.00
Non-members: R160.00. Daily rate includes lunch and teas only
Cocktail party R30.00 extra per person (cash bar)

THIRD CALL FOR PAPERS

Papers, workshops, presentations, display and exhibitions should focus on developmental programmes and practice which have relevance for South African child and youth care in the new millennium.

See Call for Papers enclosed with this issue

Please send your proposals to NACCW Conference, P.O. Box 751013, Garden View 2047, or fax to (011) 484-2928. Assistance is available to any who need help in developing their proposal.

NACCW

Conference Web Site
www.pretext.co.za/naccw/conference
e-mail: masihambeni@iafrica.com

Conference News

International visitors and speakers

A number of prominent international child and youth care people have so far expressed their intention of attending conference. An invitation has been extended to leaders and practitioners in child and family programmes in Africa.



Thom Garfat of Canada, who was Keynote Speaker at our 1987 Conference in Johannesburg, will be with us and will lead a number of sessions.

Thom has been involved in working with troubled children and their families, and the staff who work with them for 25 years as a practitioner, supervisor, director, teacher, trainer, consultant and writer. His involvement in the development of care-giving philosophies and youth care approaches has taken him to every province and territory, many of the states and a number of different countries.

Thom is also co-editor of the Canadian *Journal of Child and Youth Care*, and, with Brian Gannon, is an Editor of CYC-NET, the International Child and



A blast from the past: Thom Garfat, Di Levine, Jacqui Michael and Brian Gannon at the NACCW's 1987 Conference in Johannesburg

Youth Care Network on the internet. Also due to visit is **Jack Phelan**, a child and youth care educator from Edmonton in Canada, where he is also connected with the Alberta Child and Youth Care Workers Association. Students on supervision courses in South Africa are familiar with some of his writing. Yet another visitor who hopes to be at Conference is **Nick Smiar** of the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire. Nick is a frequent visitor to South Africa, and one of the NACCW's long-standing international members. Nick was responsible for developing the well-known Professional Assault Response Training (PART) course.