

Child and Youth Care Work

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 **NACCW**

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHILD CARE WORKERS

Editorial

By Merle Allsopp

The NACCW hopes that this bumper Christmas issue of *Child and Youth Care Work* sparks in you, the reader, the same enthusiasm and delight that it did in those of us who have compiled these sixty pages packed full of information about our profession.

The issue starts off with a tale to inspire all social service professionals. This tale is in fact a true real-life story of success. Sitembiso Cele, who grew up in Durban Child and Youth Care Center, has written up his address to the KZN NACCW Region's Mini-Conference, held earlier this year, telling us from his direct experience what really matters for children growing up in child and youth care centers. His words of inspiration and wisdom are what many of us need as the year rushes to an end, and we reflect on our work over the 2016 period. His key message is: "if every child in care, both former and present, were addressing you today, they would want you to know that the work you do matters more than you will ever know." These are simple, but profound words, affirming the work of all child and youth care workers. He leaves us with a forceful challenge to take into 2017: "Always remember that you are our ultimate role models, your every word, movement and action has an effect on who we become." We know this, but coming from a person who grew up in the care of child and youth care workers, this reminds us of the *constant* responsibility we have to be the best people we can be – a tall order indeed.

This issue of the journal is very local. Alfred Harris, long-serving NACCW member and past regional chairperson, describes his personal child and youth care journey

– and we hope his story will inspire other child and youth care workers, young and old, to write up their stories for us to read and enjoy. Alfred's story starts in pre-professional days when workers were often deployed in settings where the work we do was not conceptualized as child and youth care work – a profession and a discipline with a practice methodology and a literature and knowledge base. We also carry an article reprinted from *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice* chronicling the development of the child and youth care work profession and of the NACCW in our country. Hopefully it will create a context and a background for a new generation of child and youth care workers to get to know the journey of development that our field has travelled over its 41 years of history of formalized orchestrated activity – and inspire further activism and innovation in child and youth care work.

And on the note of innovation, the description of the concept behind the NACCW's latest flagship model, Isibindi Ezikolweni, describes a new frontier that is beginning to open up to child and youth care workers – school-based child and youth care work. Ever since I have been in the field I have heard people say "we need child and youth care workers in schools" – and now this is beginning to become a reality. We know many children struggle for a variety of reasons in school, and if child and youth care workers can demonstrate that they are not just a nice-to-have element in schools, but professionals who impact on school drop-out rates, gender-based violence in schools and on pass rates – schools may well emerge as key deployment settings for child and youth care workers in the future.

Staying with innovation, Harold Slabbert, Lizzie King and Sabitha Samjee describe the humbling process of taking child and youth care training to refugee settings in the Middle East, in the context of Isibindi Without Borders, and we hear of the stunning gender empowerment work being done by child and youth care workers in the context of the DREAMS program. Going global, Pat Maqina describes her experience as an Ambassador for the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance.

This issue also shows some strong regional activities having taken place in the KZN, Western Cape and Eastern Cape regions, and whets our appetites for a Kimberley biennial conference – which will happen sooner than we think as the months fly by next year.

This issue also carries a serious message from the South African Council for Social Service Professionals (SACSSP). We have reprinted some key communication from the SACSSP for the purposes of showing that we do indeed have a new and different Council in place, that is setting about its business of regulating the profession in a determined and accessible manner, valuing the social service professionals it serves, and working hard to rectify the backlog in processing applications for regulation that have been received from child and youth care workers – which we are all eagerly awaiting. This is indeed good news, and is a positive note on which to round up the year and say "Happy Christmas" to all who celebrate the festive season thus, happy holidays to all, and everything of the best for an excellent 2017 to child and youth care workers across our country.

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