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# Oasis Association

Annual Review  
2014/5



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Elsies River workers in their reinstated workshop.



**Services Manager, Gail Davids' story**

*Gail's journey with Oasis is 13 years strong and her enthusiasm and drive inspire others. She is responsible for managing social work, houses, day centres and the holistic well being of all beneficiaries. Gail says "my role is to make sure that the 480 beneficiaries at Oasis get the best possible service." She particularly enjoys the*

*connection between the staff of Oasis and the beneficiaries, who easily communicate with staff at every level. One of the highlights of Gail's year was the Department of Social Development's (DSD) recognition of her motivation to provide a service for adults with severe or borderline moderate intellectual disability, which is sometimes the result of regression due to aging. They are a group who for too long have fallen outside of suitable services. She feels that this new programme bridges a huge gap. [Note. DSD has recognised this as an essential service and committed to a funding partnership, which assists with rental, transport and care staffing for example.]*



## OUR FAMILY ALBUM

**New senior team members.**



**Finance Manager, Enih Sone**



**Fundraiser, Blessing Tsiga**



**HR Officer, Jackie Sias**

Every family has its stories. Oasis' stories are sometimes good, some not so good. Some are amusing, some ordinary and some are moving. But they are our stories nonetheless and they are what made the year under review what it was.

Our family of beneficiaries, staff, volunteers, friends and partners is a large one and what follows is the annual review of our Oasis Association family 2014/2015. We share with you our stories, photos and memories.

The pervading issue of 2014/2015 was the fire that devastated the Elsies River workshop and impacted all of us on many levels including our financial results. Every department of the association was disrupted, as the workshop property was out of bounds for the duration of reinstatement. Two hundred workers and their supervisory staffing were accommodated at Claremont and Ravensmead centres. Passenger vehicles and recycling collection vehicles were off the road. Administrative staff were involved in inventories, insurance claims, transportation logistics and construction related matters. In conjunction with this, the remodelling

of two houses into one, on the Chukker Road property, took a full year to complete. This meant that for this full period, residents were accommodated on the Claremont property, in addition to the displaced Elsies River workers. It was a tight squeeze!

Sometimes it takes a storm to uncover treasure. Two gems extracted from these difficult circumstances, were the resilience of all workers and residents and the willingness of staff to walk the extra mile for an extended period. Time and time again I was stopped in my tracks by this. I work with an extraordinary team.

**Gail Bester**  
**Executive Director, Oasis Association**



## SOCIAL WORK

Within any profile of people, a certain percentage of the whole requires social work intervention. Adults and children with intellectual disability are no different and we provide a professional social work service within Oasis. During 2014/2015, the three social workers' work load included seeing 234 adults and children within Oasis services on an individual basis and a further 179 within groups; 185 family members and 80 community members were supported, advised and referred to suitable resources. Forty Oasis staff saw the social workers, primarily for training.

In individual and group sessions the social workers deal with a diverse range of matters. These sessions are aimed at optimising quality of life, ensuring protection of the vulnerable, restoring and maintaining family unity and the development of life and social skills. Some concrete and pleasing outcomes during the period under review were a greater awareness of appropriate relationships, better supported decision making, improved communications and identifying situations of poverty and sometimes abuse and neglect. This heavy workload was exacerbated by the consequences of the upheaval caused by

the fire in March and the building project at Chukker Road.

In addition to all of this, social workers did screening of prospective residents for Oasis services, sat on the Oasis HIV/AIDS panel, trained staff, did numerous home visits; and worked together with SAPS, hospitals and various organisations and groupings within our sector.

**Senior Social Worker Geraldine Symons' story**

*Geraldine joined Oasis 19 years ago. She sees her role primarily as giving relevant support when there are matters that may negatively impact the well being of any Oasis beneficiary. Over the years, Geraldine has been instrumental in the development of a day centre in Delft and a group home in Ruyterwacht. One of Geraldine's joys is that the group home has been providing a dignified living space for adults with intellectual disability since 2004. The highlight of 2014/2015 for Geraldine was returning to the reinstated workshop building.*

*"It was a great feeling being home!"*



**Day Centre Co-ordinator, Filicity September's story**  
 Filicity joined Oasis in 2007, first as a PA to senior management. Her promotion to running the Day Centres was an answer to prayer as she had been interested in working more closely with people with intellectual disability. Filicity is excited when a child makes progress, however small and loves to hear the excitement in the voice of a caregiver who has worked with the child. She loves to see the smiling faces of the children and knowing that she is making a difference!



## DAY CENTRES



During 2014/2015, the Day Centres served 95 children, including 5 new admissions. Working in partnership with the Department of Education, each group of children was given a programme which in turns assists each child with their individual development programme. This is monitored and supported by special programme implementers. Thirty children were included in the self feeding programme and 20 in the potty training programme with 50% and 55% respectively, maintaining ability after 6 months and almost all others showing improvements. Two children showed sufficient development to enable them to be transferred to schools for learners with special educational needs, with a further two identified for future development leading to being "promoted out" of the day centres. Another vital programme is the school holiday programme where one group of day centre children per holiday are identified and their families are assisted to continue their individual development programme. The day centres are a haven for a particularly vulnerable group of people, with severe and profound intellectual disability which occurs

across the full societal spectrum at 1 in 1000 births. The majority are transported to their centres in Delft and Ravensmead in Oasis transport. They receive nourishing food and milk daily. Those in particularly difficult circumstances, receive food parcels. Pivotal to developing individual potential is the specially designed individual support plan. A high number of the children have secondary problems such as epilepsy, cerebral palsy, and auditory and visual problems. A team of care givers, drivers, a cook, a social worker and a sessional physiotherapist care for the children. But this special team see Oasis Day Centre children as special children. The team work hard at developing their potential, giving hugs and tickles, changing nappies and feeding hungry little mouths, sometimes painstakingly when a child has specific feeding challenges. While the Elsie's River workshop building was being rebuilt, the day centre in Ravensmead generously accommodated 80 Elsie's River workers, in a marquee. In May 2014 the adult service commenced in the day centre hall. It started with 9 adults from the day centre and grew to twenty three by December 2014.

# Workshops



## Manager of workshops, Beverley Damons- Jonas' story

Beverley Damons-Jonas was newly qualified in caring for the aged and disabled, when she happened on Oasis. She was intrigued by a quaint Victorian House tucked under the bridge in Elsie's River and decided to satisfy her curiosity. A job at Oasis was the result! Starting as an admin worker and toiling at more studies, Beverley worked unstintingly and today is the manager of the Oasis Workshops in Claremont and Elsie's River. She says she's seen a lot of change over twenty two years. She's been part of transforming the strategy of Oasis from "welfare" to "welfare supported by social enterprise." She's seen the growth of the recycling projects and shops. And her beloved Elsie's River Workshop where her journey began is no longer in a cramped Victorian house but a proud factory building. "When I look back at all of this, I know I have been involved in something beautiful," Beverley says.



## WORKSHOPS

Oasis workshops continue each year to provide a protected environment where men and women can work at their own pace and to the level of productivity which they can contribute. During 2014/2015 over 400 people were employed by Oasis workshops, 389 of whom have intellectual disabilities. A special highlight of the year, announced at the 2014 AGM, was special long service awards for workers, ranging from 10 to a wonderful 46 years – Pam Adams of the Elsie's River workshop. Two events were held with family members and guests in attendance and our workers excitement was tangible both at the presentation ceremony and party afterwards. Sport is an important part of the workers' lives and Oasis' holistic approach to our beneficiaries. Sport continued throughout the year and workers participated in local netball, athletics and soccer fixtures. During provincial competition five workers were selected for national competition. Another unprecedented highlight and a tribute to the ability of people with intellectual disability, was the qualification of Magdalene van Niekerk for the 100 meters walk at the Special Olympics in Los Angeles USA. (The event fell outside of the period under review in August 2015, but we have to tell you - Magdalene won gold! It was a wonderful, proud



moment for her and all of us.) Training and development of staff included the annual standards of first aid, safety rep training and HIV/AIDS training. Twenty staff members attended computer literacy classes at UWC and three seniors did project management and planning. Others did contract work lay out and some dealing with difficult behaviour. Elsie's River Workshop being destroyed by fire was a serious set-back and impacted workshop productivity and thus income in many ways. A lot of stock was destroyed in the fire and two trucks were out of commission for months, seriously curtailing collections of recycling materials. Space was very compressed due to the workshop site being out of bounds and this severely hampered work. One of the highlights of a difficult situation was workers from both Oasis workshops working alongside each other

and forging friendships. At times one completely forgot the tragic events due to the cheerfulness and fortitude of the workforce. This being said, the Oasis staff team were truly remarkable in all they extra effort they applied to maintaining continuity and equilibrium in the workplace. The reinstatement of the building gave rise to the opportunity to redesign some areas and to address various repairs and maintenance needs. Workers returned to their pristine "new" building in November 2014 and remain fiercely proud of their workshop.





**House parent, Virginia Solomon's story**

*"I started as a relief house parent and then moved to a permanent house parent position. My role is literally to be a parent, loving and nurturing the family of individuals, who look up to me as a parent. I love, nurture, listen, care, cook and clean. Like any family I have standards of discipline and principles I instil in the residents. I also do admin, grocery listing, shopping and administering residents' medicines. Last year the house renovations were concluded and we moved in.*

*The day we moved in I could see the residents were happy. I could see it in their eyes. I love the nurturing aspect of the job, seeing residents blossom. I also love cooking. There is no meal I cook for the sake of just making sure the residents eat, I cook to make sure we enjoy our meals. I love my family here, deeply."*

**HOUSES**

Tragically during 2014, the house parent at Ruyterwacht house, Betty Rhodes passed away. With 35 years service at Oasis, Betty was an institution and is sorely missed both for her remarkable contribution and spirited personality. Social workers have played an essential role in helping residents come to terms with their significant loss. We are grateful to every staff member who has stood in breach and done house parenting duty, to tide us through a challenging time.

In August 2014, residents finally moved into the Chukker Lee House, so named by the residents of the merging houses – a house which can accommodate more than 30 residents. The house was entirely renovated and expanded with funding from a bequest and a grant from the National Lottery Trust Distribution Fund. D G Murray Trust Fund, Department of Social Development and the Carl and Emily Fuchs Foundation assisted to fit and furnish the house generously with industrial laundry and kitchen equipment, suitably robust lounge seating, mattresses with a long life span especially suitable for back support, bedroom wardrobes and dining tables and chairs. Their funding also extended to garden furniture for leisure time and relaxation.

Part of the rationale of expanding the house was to provide more beds for those who need housing. In the period ahead at least eight people from a long term waiting list will be given the opportunity to go into the house integration programme. This involves

visits for supper and weekend social events, weekend sleep overs and then the reality of a two week stay and sometimes a full month stay. On admission a three month probation applies. This protracted process is vital to ensuring the fit of a new resident into a large existing family, with the least possible disruption. Residents at Ruyterwacht are also permitted to consider transferring to the Chukker - Lee House and one has started integration.

The expanded house was also intended to address residents' ageing issues such as less work and more rest time and facilities that will assist staff to provide better care to residents when they are unwell.

An important consideration in the construction was environmental responsibility and long term sustainability in terms of the costs of energy and water. A large underground reservoir stores rain water to be used in the house, a grey water recycling system was installed and all hot water is heated as far as possible from large solar panels.

The residents of northern and southern suburbs houses sometimes get together for outings when a happy bus load will head out for a visit to the seaside or a park. The Ruyterwacht community have included the twelve residents in the neighbourhood.

They visit each other, play soccer together and some go to church together.

At the time of writing this review Oasis is looking for suitable house parenting staff, both for permanent and relief positions.

Email Gail Davids at: [services@oasis.org.za](mailto:services@oasis.org.za)



Bookshop & Recycling



**Claremont Bookshop Manager, Alison van den Berg's story**

*In the 30 some years Alison has been at Oasis she has seen much change. She says that the Claremont workshop had 70 workers in the 1980s,*

*but today there are 150. Alison sees her role as ensuring the smooth running of the shop and making sure shelves are stocked daily is vital. Happy customers drive her because she knows they will return which is important for a shop which generates income to provide the best service for beneficiaries.*

*Alison says "The generosity of people amazes me all the time. I stop and think that every day we have a stocked shop because people have generously given us books, bric-a-brac and clothes. I am truly grateful for the people that see the value of our work and want to be part of it."*

**BOOKSHOP**

Oasis Books & Bric-a-Brac shops are situated in Claremont and Pinelands. They boast shelf after shelf of gently used books, household goods, collectibles and rails of clothing, sold at very reasonable prices, making them a shopper's delight. The Claremont shop has a lovely tea garden and delicious home bakes from the Oasis bakery. All stock in the shop is donated by generous donors at the Claremont recycling drop off on a daily basis. Oasis could not be sustained financially without its shops and values every single donation.

**RECYCLING**



So many people know Oasis only for its recycling, not realising that it is the meaningful occupation and a means of income to hundreds of our workers – one aspect of Oasis' core business.

The public drop offs of household recycling and the hundreds of businesses where we collect white paper result in an average of 200 tons being processed and sold on every month. Excluding scrap metal and e waste, this converts to a whopping 330 cubic metres monthly. The City of Cape Town has workers with intellectual disability to thank for this significant saving in landfill space. (Household drop off at corner of Lee and Imam Haron Roads, Claremont) Claremont is the base for domestic drop offs, but Elsie's River workers also process huge volumes of mixed recyclables from businesses and recycling companies. Another team works off site at Mutualpark, where Oasis has had the recycling tender for many years.

Please visit our website if you want to recycle with Oasis - [www.oasis.org.za](http://www.oasis.org.za)



Claremont shop and drop off  
Corner Lee and Imam Haron  
Roads Claremont  
021 6745570  
Mon to Fri 8h30 to 16h00  
Sat 9h00 to 13h00

Pinelands shop  
Shop 19, West End Mall  
Mutual Park, Jan Smuts Drive  
Pinelands  
021 5319239  
Mon to Fri 7h30 to 16h00  
Sundays 8h30 to 12h30