



*Kids from Kids Haven*

September 2005

Dear Friend,

Kids Haven. The P. I. N. (People In Need) Project. Zululand Hospice. Your generous financial support is making it possible for the people who run these three projects to save lives, stop the suffering, and give hope to South African children – children who, along with their families, are battling the horrors caused by HIV/AIDS.

You and I and everyone fighting the HIV/AIDS pandemic know it's going to get far, far worse before it gets better. That's the inevitable biology of the insidious disease we're fighting. But, get better it will, if you and I – and others like us – stay the course, never falter.

Our challenge – one we must confront every day – is to do everything we can to help as many children as possible survive the pandemic. Ours is a rescue mission.

I need to tell you about the children and their family members you're helping at Kids Haven, the P.I.N Project, and Zululand Hospice. For just a moment, I want you to imagine what it would be like to be one of those children, because, on their behalf, I want to ask you – no, not just ask, I want to beg you – to consider making a monthly commitment to the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund.

I'm asking this of you because Kids Haven, the P.I.N. Project, and Zululand Hospice are helping kids and their families every day. I want you and me to be able to promise the people who run these projects and to promise the kids they're helping that “we will be there for you every day.”

As you know, any financial support you can provide is deeply, deeply appreciated, but please, will you take some time today to carefully and thoughtfully consider making a generous, regular monthly commitment to help the children of South Africa? Please!

Compassion, courage, and determination founded Kids Haven. It was 1992. Moira Simpson, the current director, was appalled by the suffering of the children living on the streets in Benoni, a city of about 400,000, 30 kilometres east of Johannesburg.

A social worker, Moira pleaded with the Benoni Welfare Department to help the children; begged that they get the kids off the street before it was too late to save them. The officials refused. Undaunted and in protest, Moira pitched tents in the gardens of the welfare department and stood vigil, hoping to shame the welfare department into action. Still they refused.

Finally, Moira was forced to realize that there was no hope at the welfare department for the children she was trying to rescue. She would have to save the kids herself. She placed an offer to buy the vacant Old Kelifontein Hospital where she planned to set up her own rescue center and shelter. Moira waited for a response. None came. Finally, after waiting for eight months, Moira simply took possession of the hospital. Twenty children moved in, Kids Haven was born, and the healing began.

Today, Moira, volunteers from around the world, and the Kids Haven staff rescue hundreds of children every year. They depend on the compassion and support from people like you.

Shadi Xaba is the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund's Program Specialist responsible for Kids Haven. Shadi is 36 years old, a social worker who has two children of her own. She said,

"The kids range from ages 5 to 22. They're mostly boys ... about 60%.

They go to the city because their families are breaking down. The parents are often suffering from HIV/AIDS, and can no longer support their children or themselves. The kids become the heads of the household.

"They go to the city because there they can beg food and money, but many of them become victims of crime as older children and gangs of children steal their food and money, and beat them. Soon the older kids recruit the young kids into crime."

"It's terrible for them. Many are murdered. Others, in despair, take their own lives. Many more are forced to help adult criminals."

"The longer the kids stay on the street, the more difficult it is to save them. We need to get them off the street within days of them arriving in the city."

How is your support helping these kids? Your gifts make it possible for the Kids Haven social workers to find the kids and get them into the Kids Haven shelter where they're given food, shelter, medical care, and a safe night's sleep.

From the shelter, they go to one of Kids Haven's four homes, where the real rescue work begins – work that will *keep* the kids off the street. Kids Haven volunteers teach the kids the life skills they'll need to make their way in the community. And, where possible, they help the kids return home. Kids Haven enrol kids in school. They need an education if they are to have any hope of a future.

Last year, Kids Haven was able to get 70 kids back into their homes; 46 kids were adopted, finding new parents not only in South Africa, but also in Spain, the Netherlands, and Germany. Mapule, one of the abandoned girls who lives at Kids Haven, has gone on to represent South Africa in international wrestling competitions. Yes, Kids Haven works.

It costs about \$250 per month to rescue a kid from the streets of Benoni, give them shelter and medical care, and then the skills and education he or she will need to either be reunited with their family or make it on their own as adults. Some kids, like Mapule, live out their childhoods at Kids Haven. There's no other home for them.

*Kids Haven is one of the reasons I'm hoping you'll be able to make a monthly commitment to the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund.*

The P.I.N. Project – the People In Need Project – is another reason I'm hoping you can help with a monthly commitment.

In South Africa, HIV/AIDS has claimed – and continues to claim – the parents of tens of millions of children. Their best hope is to remain at home, and not try to survive on the streets. It falls to the grandparents – mostly grandmothers – to raise these orphaned children.

In 1999, Alice Searle – a grandmother herself from Derbyshire, United Kingdom who was a volunteer with the British charity VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) and was helping at the University of Zululand – saw the need for these grandmothers (“gogos” in Zulu) to earn some money to pay for the necessities to raise their grandkids.

Alice began by helping six gogos in the township of Esikhawini in KwaZulu-Natal use their traditional craft skills to produce saleable items. For a “product,” they took inspiration from the traditional Zulu “love letter” – a one inch square of intricate beadwork – and added the symbol of support for those fighting HIV/AIDS.

The Zulu beadwork pin of the P.I.N. Project is a red HIV/AIDS ribbon on a white background, woven on a safety pin. The red ribbon symbolizes support for people living with HIV/AIDS. The white bead background symbolizes the purest form of love. The safety pin symbolizes the holding together of torn and damaged families.

Today, the pins are sold, usually for about \$5.00, in many countries (over 15,000 pins to date). The sales not only provide the gogos with money to help them raise their grandchildren, but also provide money for community projects and HIV/AIDS awareness programs.

*If you find it in your heart to become a monthly contributor to the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, it would be my honour to say “thank you” by sending you a pin from the P.I.N. Project – a pin made by a gogo who is now able to keep her grandchildren safe at home, thanks to your support.*

Our personal circumstances, yours and mine, may differ remarkably from those of the people we are trying to help in South Africa, but one thing we share in common with them – and with all humanity – is the grief we suffer when a parent, spouse, or child dies. That's because we share with all humanity a common love for our parents, our spouses, our children, our families.

Your support has been helping the care-givers at the Zululand Hospice provide palliative care to men and women dying from HIV/AIDS. Care-givers like Bonisiwe physically and emotionally comfort not only the dying but also their survivors.

The hospice, which is in Empangeni, KwaZulu-Natal 150 kilometres northeast of Durban, helps the dying with their suffering and fears, and their families with their grief. It also helps the surviving

family members meet the practical demands of moving on after a loved one – perhaps the major breadwinner – has died.

I can explain best what the hospice does by sharing with you portions of a letter sent to Bongiwwe Mhlongo, a project coordinator at the hospice, by Mrs. Nelisiwe Mbele:

“... I am writing this letter in great joy because of all the beautiful work you have done for me. I am now feeling better emotionally and my children are very happy. I really had no means of paying my children’s school fees and to buy them school uniforms, but you have done all this for me.

“Bonisiwe, your care-giver, visits me all the time to check. She does not get tired to do this. ... I just want to thank you for your love and care. God will thank you on my behalf according to the way He deems fit to bless you, thank you very much.”

Because of your support and that of many people like you, children and families throughout South Africa – people like Mrs. Mbele, Mapule at Kids Haven, and the gogos of the P.I.N Project – are coping with the horrors of HIV/AIDS.

Their struggle is an everyday one, which is why – on their behalf – I’m asking you to carefully consider making a monthly commitment to the Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund. Let me – on your behalf – tell them that they can count on you and me every day.

Please, if you’d rather not make a monthly commitment just now, a generous contribution from you would not only be enormously helpful, but deeply appreciated.

For the children and with thanks,



Mark Beckles,  
*Chief Executive Officer*

P.S. If you choose to make a monthly commitment, please wear the P.I.N. Project pin that I’ll send you in thanks – wear it whenever you can. The gogos’ pins are a wonderful way for us to urge other caring people to support the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and to help those – particularly the children – who suffer every day.