

Othandweni

Winterveldt, South Africa

Othandweni is a guest house, day-care center and after-school program, all under one roof, located adjacent to the Bokamoso Life Centre in Winterveldt, South Africa. It is community-based (CBO), and is on the verge of becoming a non-profit organization (NPO). The name means "Place of Love".

For several years now, Linda Nunes-Schrag and her husband Bill Drehmann, have been tending our relationship with Othandweni.

Othandweni Guest House



The Othandweni Guest House offers hospitality to visitors to Winterveldt, particularly those who are visiting the Bokamoso Youth Centre, providing excellent service in a rustic environment. There is no radio, TV or telephone in the rooms, but the rooms are clean and comfortable.

Othandweni Day Care Center

The day care center serves children ages one month to six years who are taught at two levels in English as well as in their native languages. The older ones are prepared for first grade. Two meals, and a range of indoor and outdoor activities, are provided for the children.



Day Care children gather at the end of the day with their teachers.



Day care kids and some teachers love to pose for the camera while waiting for their parents to pick them up.



View to the entrance of the classrooms of the Day Care Center.

Othandweni After-School Program



The After Care High school youth use music and poetry to enact a scene of the protest in June 16, 1976, in response to the introduction of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in local schools. It has become a public holiday.

The after-school program cares for vulnerable youth in school. The neighbourhood has no facilities for the youth after school, and some parents worried that their children might be at risk. Other parents preferred that their daughters help at home with cooking and cleaning. The program is unfunded because parents have no money to pay for this service. The kids were too young to attend at Bokamoso, hence this became the birth of this program. The staff saw a need

and responded. The youth are offered space to do their homework and are helped as needed. They learn music, song and dance and they have developed powerful voices.

At one time the youth were given a plot to tend and learn how to plant and care for their own produce.



Garden plot on the side of the Othandweni Day Care Centre helps to supplement food needs.



In their new outfits and with drums in the background, the After Care youth dance and sing. They have been invited to perform in and outside of the local area.



After the last visit to Othandweni BY Linda and Bill, Bill offered the following reflections.

**Bill's Drehmann's Report on Call
Supporting Othandweni
2015**

Most of you know that not so long ago Linda my wife and I flew to South Africa and stayed at the Othandweni Guest house to continue the project she had started on roughly 3 years earlier. But fewer may know that it was your Growing Edge Fund that boosted my getting there.

Linda felt a deep commitment to this project and felt that a return trip was badly needed to ensure its progress. And she hoped very much that I would join her on this trip. Normally I would have been delighted at the prospect of working by her side on a mission in a foreign land. But this time I was not eager to go, because a whole number of projects at home were not getting done, and the trip would add to the incursions into our wallets. At the same time I did not want to see her go alone; she would be in a remote area, working within a different culture and relating to a group of people, the staff, who were often at strife with themselves.

As her determination persisted, I stalled for starts, and hoped she would be able to go with a colleague like Jim Cawley was on her previous trip, one with valuable experience in aid projects, with whom she could exchange thoughts on no end of matters, and who had a car to get to necessary places. And then I would be at home enthusiastically dealing with the unfinished business. No such colleague appeared, however, when she finally set a date. Meanwhile, seeing the young folks from Bokamoso perform again, and hearing another eloquent inspiring message from Ambassador Rasool tipped the scale for me. The call became clear and I decided to go with Linda no matter what.

Then it was suggested that I apply to the Growing Edge Fund, since our means were limited. I was reluctant at first, thinking of the call I felt to go with Linda as having a small c, while the provisions of the fund related to one with an intimidating capital C. Nevertheless, good-hearted people encouraged me to apply, and the committee granted me aid that made a substantial difference to us.

So we flew off and reached Johannesburg. Unfortunately flu got to me before 24 hours had elapsed; it postponed our departure for Winterveldt by 3 days, and even afterwards kept my energy diminished. When I felt good enough we rented a car and I practiced driving on the wrong side of the road, the way all South Africans drive. The main roads were excellent except for referring to unknown place names instead of directions at interchanges. But we made it to Winterveldt in spite of that. The last mile to Othandweni and other local roads were unpaved, with ruts, billows, holes and craters to circumvent. For Linda the driving would have been tortuous, and I am glad that I could spare her that. Except for a post office and a rudimentary country store, Othandweni is far from basic amenities. The car proved indispensable for taking us and members of Othandweni's staff to stores, to the bank, to church, to clinics, to visit people etc.

Linda and I became, in my opinion, a good team as I got involved with the project. I saw the great rapport she had with the staff, and the special care she had for them and the children of the pre- and after-school programs. She had hoped that I would work on the accounting and the bookkeeping, which turned out to be a major task involving us both with different staff members. Things went smooth except for one particular time that Linda got upset, when I was especially glad that I could be there for her. Among additional activities, we met several times with the Othandweni Board, took trips with staff members to the bank to make optimum arrangements, tried fostering bonding of the staff with 2 birthday celebrations and team building exercises, visited other non-profits for more ideas on how they can run successfully at the local level, and ran workshops for the after school kids and instructor. The days went by too fast; we had only made a dent.

Since we returned home, we have continued to work together on this project, responding to the many emails from the staff and the board, answering, advising, consenting, affirming, consoling. Somehow, Linda's call also became my own.

To the members of the Mission Support Group, who generously enabled me, I offer my heartfelt thanks.

Bill Drehmann
September 13, 2015.