

# Bridging the gap

## Die saadjies van hoop

By Lynn Berggren

Sedert Agnita Jantjies by a jeug konferensie in die Nolthando saal was, het n klein idee in haar begin grond vat. Al wat sy nou nodig het is die ondersteuning van die gemeenskap en die jeug. Agnita is n 21-jarige moeder van Hoogenoeg. Sy voel dat die kinders en veral die jeug in die area baie min geleenthede het vir vermaak. As gevolg van die raak die kinders verveeld en jag daan hulle kattedwaad aan. Maar ons kan hulle kwaaliek neem nie.

“As daar dalk ‘n biblioteek in die gebied is sal die kinders nie dorp toe hoef te loop nie”. Sê Agnita. Sy beoog ook om ‘n sportklub te stig sodat die jeug n bietjie besig kan wees in die middag as hulle uit die skool uitkom.

Die kinders en die jeug is baie na aan Agnita se hart. Dit kom van self-sprekend omdat sy n jeug was toe sy n ma geword het, en sy weet hoe dit is om jong te wees met n toekomst wat nie so blink lyk nie. Dit is hoekom Agnita nou die saadjie wat in haar geplant was daardie dag in Nolthando saal, wil water en kweek totdat dit in ‘n pragtige boom kan groei.

“Ons jongmense moet staan vir die goed wat ons wil hê” is die woorde van Agnita maar sy voel dat daar nog baie gedoen moet word om hierdie projek ‘n sukses te maak. Alleen kan sy dit nie doen nie. Sy het al die ondersteuning wat sy kan kry nodig. Soos dit altyd gesê word, die eerste tree is altyd die moeilikste, maar daarna raak die pad makliker om te loop. Enige iemand wat belangstel om vir Agnita te help kan in kontak kom met haar. Kom ons staan saam vir die toekoms van onse kinders en hulle kinders.



Agnita Jantjies glimlag want sy weet die jeug staan ‘n kans teen die euwels van die tyd.  
Pic: Alexia Berger

### What you need to know about your kids

Parents, before you think that your kids are getting into crime for no reason, have a look at this checklist. We asked around, and these are some of the answers that we got.

**Peer pressure:** there is a lot of pressure on your children to fit in with the crowd, and sometimes they do things that they should not because they see their friends doing them.

**Poverty:** according to one learner at Mary Waters High School, some steal to acquire things that they cannot get at home due to economic circumstances, whether it be food or electronics.

**Parents:** teachers see a difference in children who are disciplined by their parents. Parents who do not take an interest in their children are often unaware of why they are acting out because they have not taken the time to understand them.

**Alcohol and drugs:** this can be seen as a sub-set of peer pressure, but children who have been drinking or are high are less likely to be themselves, and can do things that they would usually stay away from. As Miss Mahlahla says, “When you are under the influence, anything can happen.”

# Crime doesn't pay, it hurts

By Jenna Beyleveld

Being a parent to a child that does crime is not easy. It causes problems within the family, as well as in the larger community.

An example of this occurred in the Hoogenoeg area over a weekend that a wedding celebration happened. The happiness was marred by a twelve year old girl having sex with a seventeen year old boy, as according to the law, this is rape. Rape is a crime, no matter the circumstances, but the terrible thing is that it has created heartache within the two young people's families, who know each other and are friendly.

Janet Jantjies from Hoogenoeg relayed this story with a *baie seer hart*. A parent to grown children, she has become a surrogate mother figure to the community around her, and believes that parents make the mistake of pushing their children away when they do something bad. "You must keep them close to you, not with money or food, but love," she says. It must be about finding that which is good within the children and bringing that into the light "little by little, because they all have talents," she adds.

Another mother from the Sun City area, Sheila Botha, is currently attempting to keep her son from falling into the crime trap. "I have rules in my house, take it or leave it," she says. She affirms that she will not have such things under her roof, and makes it clear to all those around her. "If I see you smoking in front of my house or around children, I will tell the police," she says. However, these strict rules are just to keep her sons from getting involved in crime. "That is my fear," she says.

Janet Jantjies acts as a mother figure to the community of Hoogenoeg. Pic: Alexia Berger

## "Oka-pipe gangs", is there a need for concern?

By Lynn Berggren

To many parents in the Hoogenoeg, Sun city and Mary Waters area there is a looming predator that has come out to attack their children. It comes in the shape of a bottle filled with water, looking all pretty, with a pipe that is used for inhaling. This is known as the hubbly machine or more commonly, the oka-pipe.

It is this strange contraption that has begun to cause distress in the hearts of the parents. This became evident in the focus group meeting that was held on the 25th September 2009 with the parents from the respective areas. Although the use of the oka-pipe is legal to those over the age of 16, it has become more common for younger children to use it as well.

Hendrick Jantjies, a member and father of the Hoogenoeg community believes that this new development of the "Oka-pipe" gang is what is causing the children to act up and commit crimes. The question is then: how harmless is this contraption if it is causing concern to the parents? Medically speaking the oka-pipe has many side-effects, much the same as cigarettes. In the long run and after excessive use it can cause water on the lungs as well as lung cancer. The fact that the tobacco is flavoured does not make it any less harmful, according to Professor Nakkash.

To make matters worse there is a concern that flavoured tobacco is not the only ingredient in these pipes. A learner from Mary Waters High School has told us that some people put dagga in the pipe and mix it with the tobacco; however there is no real evidence that all the users do this.

The children think that if it is legal it is ok to use. The only problem is, obedience to the parent comes first and if the parents do not agree with the use of the oka-pipe, the children should respect that. Alternatively, the parents should listen to what the children have to say about the device and gain more understanding of it. In that way they may realise that their children are not acting up because they are smoking this oka-pipe but because of deeper issues that are lying dormant. The "oka-pipe gangs" are not the problem; they are merely a symptom of the bigger problem.



# “Out of nothing, we can get something”

By Jenna Beyleveld

Being a teacher is not all about standing up in front of a class full of children, and Miss Zanky Mahlahla of Mary Waters High School is proof of that.

Miss Mahlahla, who teaches Maths, came from humble beginnings. “I am from a working class background, we lived in a rented house in a back garden,” she says. However, due to hard work and a love for the subject, she was the only Matric girl from her school to leave with Maths at that level. Upon going to L.L. Sebe Teacher Training College, she wished to continue with her passion, but was discouraged and instead focused on history and Xhosa. But the calling for Maths could not be ignored, and at her first teaching post, there was a position open in that department, and Miss Mahlahla stepped in to fill it. A Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree later, and she’s teaching your children.

“Since 1982, I have taught Maths,” Miss Mahlahla says. “I think I am married to Maths!” she laughs. She also hopes to dispel taboos that the subject has acquired. “People are scared of it, they think that it is a masculine subject and too difficult,” she says.

As a Christian and a political figure within her community (Miss Mahlahla is an active member of the ANC), she believes that her roles come together in the form of sharing of information. “You must not be selfish with your information, you cannot be big headed alone!” she says, adding that “sharing is my policy.”

It is Miss Mahlahla’s hope that she will be seen as a role model within her community. Coming from the same background as most of her students, she hopes that they will see that they can accomplish anything if they put their minds to it. “Whatever hope they may have, I am a living example,” she says. “The first house that my family saw with many rooms was my own house,” she adds.

Her advice to parents? “Nobody must be shut off, we must share and advise each other. Even I take advice from my sixteen year old niece!”



Miss Zanky Mahlahla, Mathematics Teacher at Mary Waters High School, believes that the youth should strive to live beyond their circumstances.  
Pic: Alexia Berger

## HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT PEOPLE YOUR AGE DOING CRIME?

“Ek is bang om te loop in die nag. Die rowe outjies lê in die Kloof.”  
(Latifah Stevens, 13,)



“Crime comes from your background. If you were bullied, then you end up being rough and tough on the outside. You end up doing to others what was done to you.”  
(Zelda Mahabi, 18)



“I feel bad because they steal and their futures are still ahead of them. Crime won’t do anything for them.”  
(Thulani Libi, 19)

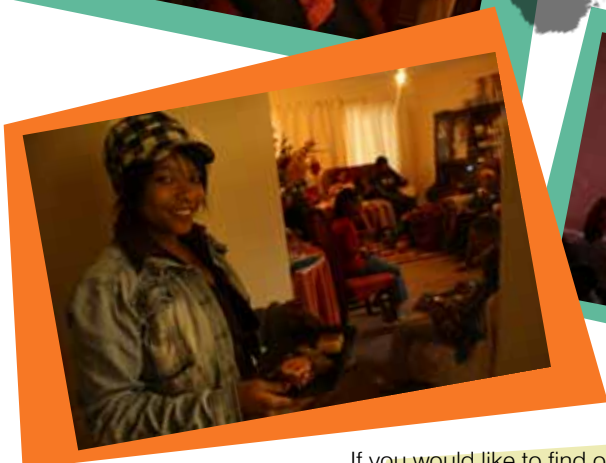


“Give them a second chance to learn from their mistakes.”  
(Sivule Fanayo, 17)

# How we got started

Project Generation Join Up would not have been possible without help from the communities of Hoogenog, Sun City and Mary Waters. During our discussions with you, we were able to isolate your concerns regarding crimes committed by the youth of the community, and chose to make this our focus. We wanted to help the youth to reconnect with the older generations, and help each generation see the effects of their actions through each others' eyes. By speaking to various members of the communities, we were able to come up with a variety of rich stories that focused on the good that was happening to help the youth, rather than just another exposé.

We hope that our stories helped to shed some light on youth and adult perspectives, and that it can help the various age brackets reach some kind of understanding about their views. The information that we compiled does not end with this newsletter. For further media produced by Generation Join Up, we urge you to visit the Grocott's Mail website (insert URL here), and look under the heading "Mapping the Footprints of Crime". Once again, thank you for helping us learn more about the things that you care about, and we hope that we can leave some kind of lasting good in your communities, Thank you for your time.



Pictures by: Alexia Berger, Tabitha Elisabeth Dillschnitter, and Candice Cupido

If you would like to find out more about what we have been doing in your communities, you can also check out our blog at [generationjoinup.blogspot.com](http://generationjoinup.blogspot.com). Along with these stories and photos, there is also a multimedia aspect which includes television documentaries and sound slides, all of these can be found on our blog. Let's get involved and bridge the gap to make a better community for everyone.