

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

a living force!



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According to the UNESCO Manifesto (1994:1) 'the public library is a living force for education, culture and information ...'

Inspired by the positive experiences related in personal stories written by users of the Rocklands Public Library, Mr Ivan Meyer, Minister of the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport, during a recent visit to the library, encouraged the possible publication of some of these stories. As most people enjoy 'happy endings' we at the **CL** were more than willing to oblige and thus start off with **Journey's end** by Fameda Govender.

As background to this series we asked the librarian of Rocklands Library, Theresa Denton, how these stories came about. She said: 'We received funding from SABINET to send our volunteers for computer classes. Part of the requirement was that at the end of the 7-week computer training they had to write their own story.'

'I want people to realise that libraries are not only housing books but have so much more to offer. I also want to highlight the role librarians can play in changing communities. My main aim is to focus on the fact that libraries are moving with the times and that we are becoming learning centres that can contribute to the good of society.'

'My life purpose is to inspire and empower

people to live their highest vision and to contribute towards uplifting communities in a constructive way through creating opportunities for people to grow and excel. The perfect place for this to happen is at libraries, the heart of a community. It was therefore my intention to publish the stories as part of a series.'

JOURNEY'S END

(unedited)

Fameda Govender

Chapter 1

I didn't want to have children, having them was the last thing on my mind, and the reasoning to my way of thinking was that there was no way that I was going to be a good parent! How could I be?

I opened my eyes suddenly one day and there I was, 21, married and with this sudden inexplicable yearning for a baby! Yes, I said it, I wanted a BABY!

My husband told me that he wasn't ready, but I was so determined to have this baby that nothing was going to stop me, not even him. Then two months later, we were pregnant. I was so sure that my husband's feelings would change and in time they did.

Nine months later we had a gorgeous baby girl, Zyaan. She was like a petite little porcelain doll, and she was mine. She was

always pale and all the doctors said she was anaemic, so I just kept giving her iron syrup, not realising it was slowly turning toxic in her body. I trusted the doctors and nurses, but I also should have asked more questions. That will forever haunt me.

Then one day, after Zyaan had turned four, something happened that would forever change our lives, and would eventually lead my life down a totally unexpected path.

Chapter 2

The day Zyaan was diagnosed with thalassaemia (genetic blood disorder), was the day that I discovered that I was pregnant with Mishka. Needless to say, those nine months were hellish. Zyaan suddenly got sick and her HB level dropped to 5, she had to receive her first blood transfusion and that was really the beginning of our story.

I remember sitting there holding her hands which were hot from her fever and asking: 'Why, why my baby'. There was of course no answer ... or so I thought.

At one point, she was complaining of constant tummy pains. An X-ray was taken and it was discovered that all the undigested food had turned into something like rocks in her tummy.

Yet, again I remember clearly, her sitting on the toilet at Red Cross Hospital,

crying from pain, asking me why this was happening to her. I looked at my beautiful little girl, my heart breaking from seeing her in agony and told her a story about a special little girl that Allah had sent to me, and who he knows can overcome this and come out stronger in the end.

The blood transfusions had now become a regular occurrence in our lives but Zyaan was still having a tough time dealing with the needles and having to lie in bed for four to five hours.

One day I met a friend, who was there with his nephew who had cancer. This brave little boy passed away two months later, but somehow he impacted both mine and Zyaan's life.

We spoke about the death of this little boy, and by the end of our conversation Zyaan had made a life changing decision that would alter the course of both our lives. She had decided that she wasn't going to cry any longer for the needles, or any of the treatments, and her reasoning for this was simply that this two-year-old was no longer able to laugh, or play, and she was still able to do all those things. I thought to myself what a child I have been blessed with, what a wondrous beautiful intelligent angel I have been sent.

Zyaan continued to do well at school, she excelled in everything she did, but her true passion was in reading and creating things artistically. One day I was telling her about how I wish that I had completed my matric, she responded by exclaiming: 'Stop complaining, mommy, if I can get A's in school and I'm sick, then what's wrong with you.'

Chapter 3

I was a regular patron at the Rocklands Library and I spoke to the librarian about my desire to complete my matric. I was ready to do my matric, yet having no money to attend night school. The staff assured me that I can do my matric without attending night school. They taught me how to use the computer to search for information, download information, such as exam papers and this is how my journey to fulfilment began. Every morning at 8.30 I would be knocking at the library's door with my four-year-old

daughter on my arm. Soon other adults enquired about study materials and this group with the help of the staff, met every Tuesday at the library. Thus the 'Adult Matric Support Group' was born.

This group inspired, motivated and supported each other with their stories of hardship and success. I then started to volunteer at the library and was taught a host of skills. I was then motivated to approach my daughter's school and ask them about starting a library at the school. I then realised where my passion lies. I established a library and then took the group to other schools where we started more libraries.

I was still busy with my matric and was elected as the chairperson of the Rocklands Friends of the Library.

I was up all hours of the morning and night studying, reading, stressing, doubting and above all fearing the unknown, then Zyaan said to me: 'Stop worrying mom, I know you can do this, you will pass.' I realised that my child had this absolute faith and confidence in me and it was time for me to start believing that too.

I was very relieved when I wrote my last matric subject and was wondering what next. I was awarded an opportunity to go for computer classes through the library, so I, together with thirteen other women, attended classes at a computer school every Saturday and we graduated, some of us with honours. I was ecstatic when I received my matric results and realised that I had passed all my subjects. I cannot describe the feeling; I broke down in the library and cried and cried. Achieving this looked so impossible, but I am a testimony that nothing is impossible.

I still had no clue as to what I wanted to do with my life. One day I was standing in the kitchen washing dishes and I asked myself: 'Is this it?' Is this really what you want to do with the rest of your life? Then I asked myself: 'What do you love?' Loudly

in my head I heard myself say: 'Reading.' I asked myself: 'What do you want to do or where do you want to be?' I suddenly realised that I want to work in a library. It was at that precise moment that I knew what I wanted to do. I was going to study Library and Information Science!

I approached the staff at Rocklands Library and they encouraged me and assisted me to find information on student loans and bursaries. I then obtained a student loan and I am currently studying through UNISA towards my degree.

My volunteering at the library continued with the staff teaching, coaching and encouraging me.

If I look back at the person I was a year ago, I hardly recognise myself. I was withdrawn, felt so hopeless and lost and basically just existed. Yet, today, the woman I see when I look in the mirror is one of strength, determination, confidence and courage. She is standing on the threshold of a wonderful new beginning, and a word she did not even dare say out loud, let alone think... A CAREER!

