

# EAGLE'S VIEW

Newsletter  
July 2015

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ORDINARY PEOPLE creating the  
**extraordinary**

## And you the youth shall give the lead

BY LESLEY JACOBS



On 16 June (Youth Day), we once again celebrated the vital and heroic role that the South African youth played in bringing an end to Apartheid. It was often with great sadness that we witnessed their sacrifice; sadness mixed with admiration for the sheer courage and commitment of these brave young people.

It is this unnerving bravery and enthusiasm that gives me hope for the future of our people and our beautiful country.

After 21 years, our democracy is coming of age. But like any young adult, it faces numerous challenges that could compromise its future development: from socio-economic conditions (poverty, crime) to social decay and a general lack of respect for the laws of this country. Our youth should be agents of change, not the reason we are concerned for the future. What does this mean for disaster management in general?

"One of the easiest disaster risk reduction measures we can take is to empower children and youth [to] ensure they are actively involved in disaster risk reduction and making their cities and communities resilient to disasters." - *Margareta Wahlström, UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction*

Children and young people are most often seen as victims of disasters rather than possibly the promoters for change. They can make a real difference in disaster risk reduction in their schools, homes and wider communities.

With 60% of our population under the age of 30 and 70% of the population living in areas prone to natural disasters and poverty, it is clear why children and youth are having a major impact. Whether it is a five-year-old getting her family prepared for a fire, a 14-year-old clearing the way for his household in an informal settlement, or a 21-year-old raising an army of student volunteers after a devastating shack fire incident; young people are stepping up and making use of their unique abilities to take action.

In short, we owe it to ourselves and those who sacrificed for our liberation to continue fighting for change and lowering the risk of disaster. Our focus needs to be on securing a healthy and safe future for generations to come.

We must ensure that our youth know that this responsibility rests with them.

With the many challenges facing our youth over the coming years, nothing looms larger and more ominously than the threat posed by HIV/AIDS, power interruptions, crime, the decline in the economy and increased poverty.

South Africans are beyond arguing the statistics or debating solutions to combat these challenges. We must simply face the stark reality that our future is threatened like never before.

It's time for a fundamental change of mind-set with regards to the way we speak about - and deal with - disaster risk reduction. It's time for our youth to get involved.

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## Fireman's Prayer

When I am called to duty,  
God, wherever flames may  
rage

Give me the strength to  
save a life, whatever be its  
age

Help me to embrace a  
little child before it is too late

Or save an older person  
from the horror of that fate

Enable me to be alert and  
hear the weakest shout

And quickly and efficiently  
to put the fire out

I want to fill my calling and  
to give the best in me

To guard my every  
neighbour and protect their  
property

And if according to your  
will, I have to lose my life

Please bless with your  
protecting hand, my children  
and my wife

- Author Unknown

The scarred and charred face of the mountains around Cape Town remain as a stark reminder of the devastation caused by the massive fires that ravaged the area this past summer. But amidst all the chaos and damage, we have all heard the stories of incredible bravery and selflessness: the tales of the countless men and women who put their lives on the line to protect the lives and homes of others, and the reports of unbelievable bravery by unnamed heroes.

But anonymous they will be no longer. In April, Minister Pravin Gordhan joined Minister Anton Bredell in thanking firefighters from across the Western Cape for their sacrifice and tireless efforts. Minister Gordhan went on to offer his sincere condolences to those who lost friends and family members during what he called a

"difficult but victorious time for us all. I want to congratulate you for your courage... your caring... and the brilliant example you provide of public service."

The firefighters in attendance, many of whom like Simoné Isaacs are serving on a voluntary basis, each received a certificate of appreciation to thank them for their continued service. "I've been doing this for 5 years," smiled Simoné who had travelled to the ceremony from her base in Atlantis. "It's amazing to do this, and I've met wonderful people."

Minister Gordhan closed by calling our local firefighters a true inspiration to everyone. "When I read the [firefighter's] prayer, it was very inspiring," said Minister Gordhan. "Those of us who work in the public sector, take on a huge responsibility for the lives and property of others."



"A difficult, but  
**victorious**  
time for us all."

Photographs courtesy of DLG Communications, IOL and thedailyvox.co.za



The numerous public acknowledgements and awards belie the humility of a life dedicated to the service and education of others

By Marlene Barnes

## Reducing the risk

In a career littered with awards, it is difficult to isolate the highlights. For example, in 2007 alone, Dr Jo Barnes received two incredible awards.

### **Order of the Disa (Member Class) for meritorious services to the Province of the Western Cape.**

This distinguished decoration was awarded for a decade of community service and education efforts to draw attention to the serious health and environmental and health consequences of sanitation failures

and pollution of our water sources in the Province.

### **Women in Water, Sanitation and Forestry Award for the category Education and Awareness for focus on the contamination of rivers.**

This award is jointly sponsored by the Department of Water Affairs & Forestry and Eskom. The initiative honours and celebrates the hard work of women in the sectors of water, sanitation and forestry. Through these awards the participation of professional

and community based women are highlighted as well as the key role women play in poverty eradication, education and sustainable development in both urban and rural settings.

### **How would you describe yourself?**

According to my friends and colleagues, I fell out of a tree (laughs). My father was ... a school principal, and later an inspector. My early childhood was spent in the Sandveld, Piketberg [before] we



relocated to Worcester. I started my student life studying mathematics. At that time, there were basically only two major job choices for a woman with my qualifications: either in the Defence Force or teaching. Since I didn't want to teach at that stage and the Defence Force did not take in many women, I had no employment prospects. I went to work at the Department of Agriculture where I had my first acquaintance with irrigation water. After some years, I changed over to the Medical Research Council where I [studied] Epidemiology.

### **What are you doing these days?**

I am currently lecturing in Disaster Management, Community Health, Epidemiology and Research Design at the University of Stellenbosch. I also occasionally lecture in the health aspects of Civil Engineering at the University of Cape Town, [and I] do a fair number of presentations on low-cost housing design with emphasis on sanitation.

### **You are known for being passionate about water quality. How does the Western Cape currently compare to other Provinces with regards to water quality?**

Water quality is not a single entity, its definition depends on the intended use of the water. If we are talking about drinking water (the highest quality category), the water in the Western Cape is of a high quality when delivered at the purification works of most larger municipalities. The problem is getting it to the users along some of

the reticulation systems that are old and leaking. If you are talking about the condition of our rivers, that is a big concern. We do produce a sizeable portion of fresh vegetables and fruit consumed in our Province locally and the quality of water used for irrigation is deteriorating ... in many places.

### **How did you get involved with Disaster Management?**

[It started with] a doctoral student who did a PHD on climate change. At that time, I was also asked to address the City of Cape Town Disaster Management team on the potential of waterborne disease outbreaks. The other driving force behind my interest in Disaster Management is that many aspects of community health (disease outbreaks, environmental pollution, etc.) are closely related to the same concerns in Disaster Management and Risk Reduction.

### **You have achieved so much in your life already. Is there anything else you would like to still achieve or do?**

I have so much I still want to do; time seems to be catching up with me though. I would love to teach low-income communities about hygiene. I do that already on a small scale, but it needs vast expansion to reduce the number of sick people in [these] communities. I would also very much like to become more involved in water quality issues in agriculture and municipal service delivery since good planning and guidance can likewise reduce the risks posed by contaminated water. Especially in times of drought it does not help to risk our dwindling

water supplies by polluting the little bit that we do have.

### **Tell us a bit about your "adopted" daughter?**

She is not adopted in the true sense of the word; she is a medical student at Stellenbosch. I'm supporting ... her by helping with fees, books ... food, clothes, books and other necessities. I'm extremely proud of her. At the beginning, I was unaware that she did not have text books but she managed to achieve high marks just by meticulously making notes in class and studying faithfully every available moment that she had. This speaks volumes for her character. She represents the new generation of young people in whose hands I feel happy to leave our country.

### **What words of wisdom do you have for the young folk out there?**

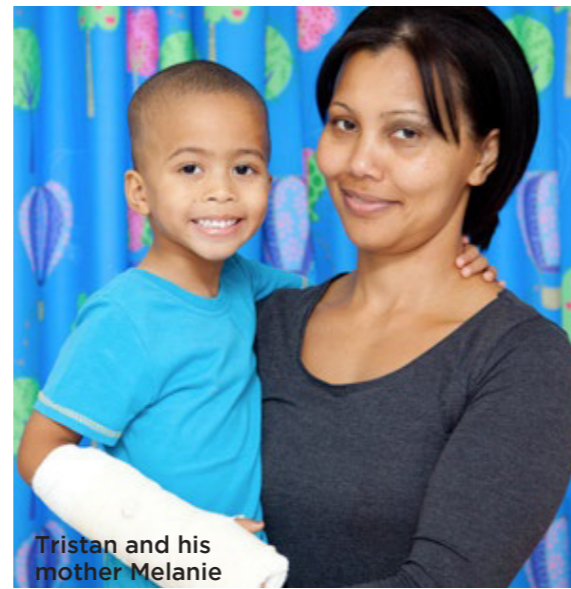
Two quotations always spring to mind: the first celebrates [people] who receive little recognition, because the media seems to focus more on people showing destructive or negative behaviour. "Count no day lost in which you waited your turn, took only your share and sought advantage over no one". [Robert Brault]

The other quotation refers more to endless meetings to apportion blame when something went wrong, while the solutions and the way forward seems to receive less attention. "In nature there are neither rewards nor punishments; there are consequences". [Robert Green Ingersoll]

I try to inspire people to knuckle down and deal with the consequences.

# Team effort saves curious child's arm

An anaesthetist and her emergency services husband joined forces to give one lucky boy a helping hand



Tristan and his mother Melanie

Four-year-old Tristan Cloete's inquisitive nature got him in trouble while exploring the workings of an electric mincing machine. When the Atlantis-based youngster's shocked family raced him, with his hand still stuck in the machine, to

Netcare Blaauwberg Hospital. "We were praying and praying that he would not lose his hand," said his mother Melanie. At the hospital's emergency department, anaesthetist Dr Ledine du Preez realised that the removal of the mincing machine would

require highly-specialised skills. And this is where Tristan's luck took a turn for the better. Du Preez immediately got hold of her husband, Colin Deiner. Deiner happens to be Chief Director of Disaster Management and Fire Brigade Services

throughout the Western Cape.

He immediately mobilised members of the Cape Town Fire and Rescue Service, the provincial Medical Emergency Transport and Rescue Organisation and an emergency doctor from the provincial health department, Dr Wayne Smith.

Deiner says: "They all came to Netcare Blaauwberg Hospital, where we spoke to plastic and reconstructive surgeon Dr Liezl du Toit, who was attending to Tristan. The little patient had to be anaesthetised and taken into the operating theatre."

According to Du Toit, it was extremely fortuitous that the husband and wife team, with their different skills, were on hand.

The solid metal mincing machine prevented X-rays from showing the full extent of the injuries to Tristan's arm.

"You know that the little boy is hurt, but have no idea how bad the injury is," Du Toit added.

This was when the team of emergency personnel stepped in, using reciprocating saws to carefully cut the machine off his arm.

Water was constantly sprayed while cutting through the metal to keep from burning Tristan's arm as the mincer was being cut away.

"After about two hours we were able to release his arm," Deiner says.

Du Toit admitted that it was extremely unusual to have emergency workers present in an

operating theatre, but said they performed their duties with great precision.

As soon as his little arm had been released, Du Toit and orthopaedic surgeon, Dr André Heyns, meticulously cleaned and closed his wounds.

"None of us could have done the procedure alone; it was an

"You... have no idea how bad the injury is"

absolute team effort," Du Toit said, describing the emergency workers as "real heroes".

Tristan was discharged four days after the accident, and is recovering at home

"We are having a little bit of trouble trying to keep him still. He just wants to play, but the cast is still fully intact," his mother said.

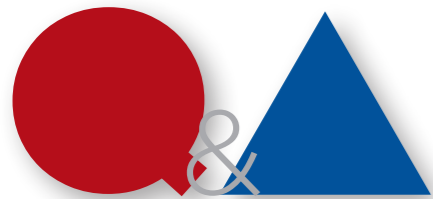
She extended her heartfelt thanks to everyone who, without hesitation, jumped in to help her baby boy.

"Tristan tells me, 'My hand is going to be fine'. That's how positive he is. As for the rest of the family, we are all praying that he will have full use of his hand when he recovers," she adds.



Plastic and reconstructive surgeon Dr Liezl du Toit and anaesthetist Dr Ledine du Preez with Tristan

Photographs courtesy of Colin Deiner and news24.com



We talk to Theo Botha and Joe Johnston to find out what inspires them.  
By Marlene Barnes



**When did you first realise that you wanted to be a fireman?**

I have always been interested in Fire and Rescue, but it was something you would watch on tv. When you saw a fire engine, it was racing somewhere to help someone. It seemed out of reach, but at high school I decided it was something that I wanted to do.

**Firefighting is dangerous: is this something you think about?**

I trust that God will keep a protective hand over me. Plus, I rely on my training, instinct and initiative to deal with various dangerous situations.

Teamwork is vital, and it is great to work with a team of dedicated firefighters. When you put on the fire gear you feel like a gladiator, but I'm also sure gladiators once said "when I put on my gear, I feel like a firefighter!"

**Psalm 23:4**

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

**What impact does your career have on your family life?**

My wife and rest of the family worry when I'm at work, but I'm sure it is more or less the same for all firefighters. Some days like birthdays, Christmas, New Year's Eve are tough, but that is part of being a firefighter. You miss out on time with family and friends but

"When you put on the fire gear you feel like a gladiator"

then you appreciate the time spent with them even more.

**What would you like to bring to your district as Acting Chief Fire Officer?**

Increased interaction and drills between the various emergency agencies and industries.

**What do you do in your spare time?**

Spending time with my wife and son; we go snorkelling, enjoying the ocean. I also thrill in cruising the streets to the roar of my motorcycle's engine.

**What about sports?**

My favourite team would be South Africa, no matter what sport or who they are playing... I am a South African first, but other than that it would be Manchester United for their teamwork and success.

**What advice would you give aspiring firefighters?**

Being a firefighter is not just a job, being passionate about it is important and it becomes part of who you are. "Be the best you can be."



**When did you first decide that you wanted to be a fireman?**

I joined the fire service in 1978. My cousin introduced me to the idea as there were vacancies at the then Divisional Council of The Cape Municipality.

My perception at that time was that firemen only responded to fires and I had no clue as to what really went on in the organisation.

**Firefighting is dangerous: is this something you think about?**

The response to incidents in either the fire engine or rescue vehicle is an adrenaline rush; this is the stage when the adrenalin begins pumping. Racing through traffic at high speeds makes your heart beat faster. And all of this while you are dressing in your PPE (Personal Protective Clothing).

Yes, there have been instances where I came close to being injured, but it was all part of the learning curve.

Responding to an incident "is an adrenaline rush"

**What impact does this have on your family life?**

Working shifts, experiencing trauma and putting your life at risk to serve the community takes its toll on family life. There has to be a balance between work and family.

**You have recently been appointed as Chairperson of the Chief Fire Officers**

**Committee. What would you like to bring to the committee?**

A commitment to see that the committee functions as it should as is stipulated in the Terms of Reference of the Western Cape Chief Fire Officers Committee, and to ensure that Fire Services capacitate themselves to comply with the applicable legislation.

**What do you do in your spare time?**

Fishing, spear fishing and travelling... exploring this beautiful country of ours.

**What is your favourite sport/sports team and why?**

Fishing and spearfishing. Spearfishing feels like living on the edge: just you, your spear gun and the elements (and the sharks, of course). Hunting in the ocean is fantastic, because you experience a different part of our world that is beautiful and fascinating.

**What advice would you give aspiring firefighters?**

If you want to achieve something in life, you have to go and get it. The fire service has evolved into a dynamic profession with lots of career opportunities for those who want to become officers and Fire Chiefs. Sometimes you have to move out of your comfort zone to experience new challenges.

**What is your motto in life?**

One life, live it.



Photographs: Sergio Kirkwood (DotP)

# Ready for the FIGHT

The lesson is simple: if we all take responsibility, we will make a difference.

**By Vumile Ncedani**

Minister Anton Bredell was on hand at the Zolile Malindi Community Centre in Mfuleni to launch the **Fire is Everyone's Fight** toolkit.

The education toolkit aims to help educators without specialist training create awareness around fire prevention.

As Minister of Local Government, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, Bredell took the opportunity to highlight the importance of educating young children about the dangers of fire,

as well as giving them the skills to help prevent fires.

"We all have a responsibility to teach our children the basics, and to act responsibly around fire. We must continuously talk to our families and friends about the dangers of fire and what to do when one breaks out," Bredell said.

The large group of young children in attendance (along with a number of educators) were presented with fire safety messages. The messages included warnings about playing with matches and lighters, as well as the need for parental involvement when it comes to fire sources around the home.

"Together we can do better. Together we will save lives with this campaign, because fire is everyone's fight," Bredell told the audience.

Campaign partners Momentum and Afrika Tikkun were also represented. Momentum's Corporate Social Investment manager Mr Emmanuel Mahlangu, said the toolkit was the beginning of a long journey that has endless

potential and is sure to have a huge impact on local communities.

"We are very excited about this programme, because it will save lives. If children buy into programmes like these, they will sell them to their parents when they get home," he said

**"Together  
we can do  
better"**

Ms Vanessa Mentor, an Early Childhood Development Expert at Afrika Tikkun, welcomed the programme as an early childhood learning tool that could have a massive difference in the kids' lives.

This innovative campaign echoes the vision of Afrika Tikkun that sees a "future where today's children... are tomorrow's productive citizens".