

# HANDS ON DECK



## CONTRIBUTORS

in this issue of Hands on Deck

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*“And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne.”*

*- Hebrews 12:1b-2, NLT*



*“To see Thembi doing this faithfully for 15 years is so amazing and helps me in my work in Germany.” – Peter Hagemann*

## **GOD’S LOVE POURED OUT**

Peter Hagemann, International Office Volunteer (Germany)

In February, Peter came to Africa for three weeks, spending time in South Africa, Eswatini and Mozambique. At the end of his time in Eswatini, before travelling to Mozambique, Peter gave the Hands at Work family a deeper insight into the work of Hands at Work Germany and shared some of his reflections from his time in the community.

“I am the coordinator for Hands at Work Germany. It is a great opportunity to be back in Africa. Hands at Work Germany started in 2008 with Bernard and Julia Essmann, who spent a year in Africa, came back and set up the Peppercorn Foundation which started to support Hands at Work. In 2016 a group of people under the leadership of Pastor Markus Kalmbach came to South Africa and Eswatini, visited several people and organisations but spent many days with Hands at Work. On our return we started the Patenprojekt Afrika, a partnership between our church district in northern Germany and Hands at Work Africa.

Over the years God has really blessed the work in Germany. We have grown

from supporting 50 children to supporting 900. In 2022 we founded Hands at Work Germany with the idea of expanding the work to other parts of Germany. We are a small team: Stephi, Jakob and me. Bernard, Marcus and Lynn (from Canada) are on the Board and help with strategy and big decisions. Our partners are mainly individuals and families and a few large donors and foundations. We have fewer church partners, but we would like more churches to see and understand the work of Hands at Work. Our main goal for 2024 is to reach more churches: to go and tell more people about Hands at Work, to touch more hearts. We are also praying for more people to join our team. However, we are very grateful for what God has done in the last few years.

During my time in South Africa I had the opportunity to network and meet people. It’s so important that you have a special time to get to know each other, to talk about personal things, to talk about Hands at Work, to ask questions, to learn about challenges. I also had the opportunity to be in a community called Mluti, which is partly supported by Germany. During the Holy Home Visit it became clear again how difficult it is for people who don’t have papers. The refugees who have come from another country have challenges because the children can’t go to school

and they don’t get support from the government.

On Friday I went to the community prayer in Pfunani. It was my first community prayer and I was happy to be there. We went on a Holy Home Visit with Thembi. It just blew my heart away when I was reminded during the Holy Home Visit how faithfully the Care Workers and the Service Centre do the same work every day, going to the same people every day, knowing that it’s not going to change tomorrow. To see Thembi doing this faithfully for 15 years is so amazing and helps me in my work in Germany.

It was so great to see the Service Centre team in Eswatini again. I spent time in Msengeni A and Msengeni B, took part in activities with the Primary Caregivers and had some time to play with the children. During one of the home visits, when Futhi said that the mother we were visiting was broken and needed to be loved, I was reminded that so much of the work in the field is about going to people, about relationships. Hands at Work is not about results and counting successes, but about loving people faithfully; loving the gogos, the children and the mothers day after day and investing God’s love in them. Jesus gives us this love and allows us to give it back to the people”.

## RUNNING THE RACE

Tyler Ralph, International Volunteer (Canada), Management Team Coordinator

In February, Tyler traveled with Sisanda (another volunteer) to the communities of Oshoek and Sthobela A and B, to reconnect with the Care Workers, children and Primary Caregivers. During the week that they spent in the communities, Tyler witnessed many of the challenges faced by the children and their Primary Caregivers.

As he reflected on his time, Tyler saw, again and again, the Oshoek Service Centre running towards the problem to address the challenges. Tyler said of the Care Workers, "They are looking at all the challenges and asking, 'How do we care for these families?' And there are no easy answers."

Tyler continues: "In the week I was there, everyone was scattered. One of the days, the team went to Eswatini with Oshoek Service Centre members, Nontobecko and Jacob, for the sole purpose of advocating for one child who arrived in South Africa without documentation. The team searched for the school to get education records. It was special to see the way they were running towards this challenge."

A Primary Caregiver, Ruth\*, faces significant housing issues. Because of this, she was forced to send her children to stay with their father in Sasatche. The team decided to visit the children and investigate their new living situation. Struggling with epilepsy, Sara\* relies on her community to help care for her children. Her epileptic fits scare her children, who flee to their aunt's house nearby. Unfortunately, this leaves Sara in a vulnerable position where she is unsupervised. While she was cooking the previous week, Sara burned her arms during a seizure. The Service Centre team is continuing to explore how they can care for Sara and her children well. Tyler reflects on the joy that Sara's children exhibit at the Care Point, despite the difficulties at home.

Many of these challenges lack easy answers and do not have immediate solutions. Instead, they take weeks, months and years of intentional care, compassion and advocacy to see effective change. The Service Centre team has started these races and is running towards the problem. Tyler reflects, "When you start a race, that's good, but you have to cross the finish line. So, they have all these challenges, but now they need to cross the finish line. They need to see them all the way through. Sometimes, as humans, when we see the difficult challenges, we can stop just short of the finish line. Please pray for perseverance in them. Pray also for Sisanda and the rest of the Regional Support Team as they encourage the Service Centre team in these difficult races. Pray that we'll hear stories and encouragement come out of these communities."

**And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. (Heb 12:1b-2, NLT)**

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## TRANSFORMING LIVES

Belindah Lengwe and Monica Mwamba, African Leaders (Zambia), Kabwe Service Centre

"Each Saturday 30-40 youth meet in Brunelli for a youth group. They are committed and united. They do things together, love and encourage one another. They help the Primary Caregivers and Care Workers. God is transforming their lives. They are hungry for Jesus. Last week Mary's mum testified how Mary's life has changed through the youth meeting. Before, she was doing things that were not pleasing to God, and she would not focus – she would turn away and not face everyone. But she is doing so much better. The youth have divided themselves to make sure that everything is cleaned. The youth love to worship and praise. They come early and make sure everything is in place."

Pray that God will continue to transform the lives of the youth. Pray that they will grow in their love for Christ and in their desire to serve one another and their community.



## BLESSED BY THEIR VISIT

Eunice Maphanga, African Leader (South Africa), Hazyview Service Centre



In January, when the team from the Hub travelled to Eswatini to support the two Service Centres, Eunice was also in the group. It was her first chance to travel to Eswatini and she expressed gratitude at being asked to go.

Eunice shares: "I visited a grandmother who had lost her daughter-in-law in December and she is still heartbroken. The family of the daughter-in-law took the children away from her. She lost her job because she was so full of stress. When she sees her son, the way that he is always sleeping and the fact that the children are far away is hard for her. Even though we are not there, the way that Nosipho and Melisi (members of the Phophonyane Service Centre) supported the family was great. She was blessed. She felt loved the way that we came to visit her.

The Care Point in Phophonyane is a Life Centre. I have never seen a Life Centre like this one. It's totally different. The under-fives is happening well. Even the Primary Caregivers and pastors

come because they know that this is the Life Centre – their home, a safe place, where they want to be. They don't need us to start the Relationship Group – the Care Workers take ownership to lead songs and they are ready to share the scripture. Even the youth came later and the younger kids had prayed already – they had their own corner where they prayed themselves.

Melisi and Nozipho know their roles and what they are doing. They know how to follow up. You don't need to tell them what to do. I'm feeling blessed by them. They make me jealous to have what they have."

## PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS

In many areas across Africa there is drought. Please pray for rain and that the crops will grow, allowing our families to have the food needed to survive.

Pray for more people to join the office in Germany, supporting the team on the accounting and administration side. Pray that more church partners/advocates will join. Pray for unity – the team works well together but pray that God helps them to stay together. Pray that God will help them to be faithful in all the work that they do.

Pray for the Youth Discipleship Ministry happening at El Roi farm in Zambia. Barbra and Brian (African Leaders, Zambia) share, "There has been such freedom and deliverance. People can put up false appearances where there is real pain. Healing and deliverance can only happen when God opens their hearts". Please join us in praying for healing and that God will do what only He can do in the lives of the boys.

Pray that as a Hands at Work family we will continue to run towards the problem and fight on behalf of the most vulnerable, even when the challenges come.