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July 2023 Report

Introduction

The month of July saw further development of our digital literacy programme with learners learning coding and website building. The gamers have also entered a new season and our learners are excelling in their categories. Our Merit Awards programme in primary and secondary school has gained momentum in motivating learners. With the end of the cold season our garden project is progressing beyond feeding our beneficiaries to selling excess produce.



School holidays' Centre based activities.

Afterschool and Weekend Programme

The holiday programme progressed as planned. There was tremendous support from the four YOSA graduates who are currently in universities. These young people attended our programme to give back to YOSA and the community. They helped with academic coaching, games as well as motivation for learners.



Curriculum coaching for learners and university students marking children's work.

The university students also benefited from clothes, and toiletries brought by Karen Glass. Donated items such as sanitary towels, sportswear, takkies and caps helped to make the holiday exciting for the beneficiary learners and the youths.



Karen and Sammy buying food and dignity packs for learners attending the holiday programme



School based and Centre based curriculum coaching activities.

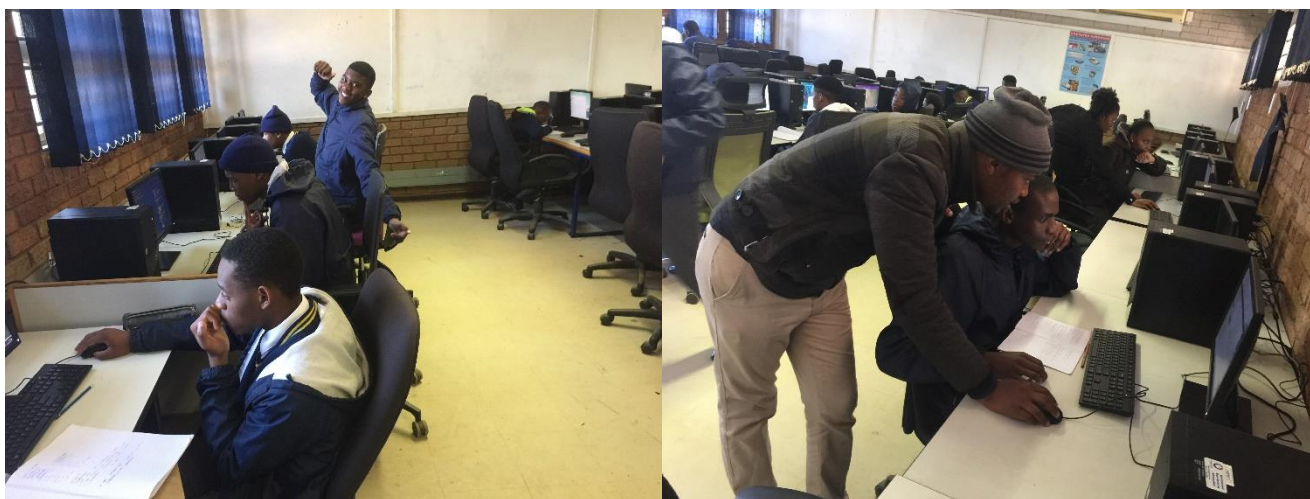


Sammy, Karen and Bridgety assisting learners with reading at the Centre.

The YOSA Out-of-School programmes are flourishing in the Soweto Community through the following activity areas:

a. Digital Literacy

Digital literacy remains one of our most exciting programmes as we witness learners transitioning from no knowledge of the computer at all to embracing coding and website building skills. The learners are very inspired by their capacity to master complex computer skills. Our IT staff have transformed the learners' worldviews. The computer labs have become the most attractive spaces for learners in the two schools. The primary school gamers are also making very good progress and becoming a force to be reckoned with in the competitions. The holiday programme provided very good opportunity for the young people to practice with adult coaching. They are confident to start their new season in August. FNZ funding is particularly instrumental in scaling up digital literacy in this poor township community.



George, YOSA Lab. Assistant with learners in the high school computer lab.

b. Midyear Academic Merit Awards

The number of learners in high school who received awards for attaining marks of 70% and above per subject was 127, up from 94 in the first term. Motivation through awarding prizes to learners for their effort is in line with our Positive Youth Development approach. It is proving to be an effective and efficient way of maintaining discipline and learners' focus on education. Learners received certificates and badges for every subject passed with 70% or better. They received tablets, cell phones and watches for digital literacy credits. We continue to appeal to our partners for any useable second-hand gadgets for learners' motivation.



Learners are seated in the hall and some on stage to receive awards.

Learners were awarded prizes for academic achievements, reading, excelling in essay writing, spelling bee and public speaking competitions organized by YOSA, good behaviour, punctuality and contribution to make the school a better place to learn. The prizes included certificates, books, stationery, trophies and badges. The learners are experiencing this level of appreciation for their efforts for the first time. This has made this year very special for the children in this underserved community.

Teachers are also beginning to appreciate that love and acknowledgement can transform learners' attitudes.



The two avid readers who were awarded a copy of the Astonishment book each.



Learners who excelled in digital literacy received tablets, cell phones and watches.

The donations from YOSA Friendship Circle in Australia who include Trevor, Karen, Janine, Maddi, Courtney, Anna and Sammy have made it possible for us to hold a merit award ceremony for one of our primary schools. A total of 88 prizes were assembled from the donations of stationery provided by our friends. Being the first of its kind, the principal invited parents to also attend the ceremony. Astonishment gave a keynote address that focused on parental involvement in the education of their children.



The principal and some of the learners who received prizes on the day.

c. Grannies' Support Group

The month of July seems to have been the coldest month in the year, yet the grannies braved the cold weather to attend their support group. With the help of our friends, we offered them early morning tea and lunch

including heating the room where they worked to keep them warm. During the school holiday they managed to work consistently throughout the week and completed some of their items. The grannies now have some finished items to sell to start a revolving fund for their project. It was such a pleasant gift for the grannies to receive visitors who were interested in their work such as Karen and Sammy.



Karen and Sammy of Qantas Airline from Australia chatting to and observing grannies at work.

d. Learner Profiles

During the month of July, our social workers set out to compile profiles for learners in one of the high schools that we are supporting. This move was motivated by the high rates of substance use, violence, indiscipline conduct and learners' lack of motivation to achieve. We needed to take a closer look at the learners we are dealing with and figure out how best to help them. By the end of July, YOSA staff had compiled 650 profiles for learners. This constitutes half of the school's enrollment. Preliminary findings show that just 10,6% (69) of these learners live in households with their biological mothers and fathers. Because of family fragmentation the bulk of these learners live in single parent families and secondary families: with extended families and even child headed households. In the maze of scramble for provisions children grow up with very little adult supervision. Through initiating after-school, weekend and holiday programmes that have feeding arrangements YOSA is therefore playing the role of significant adult in this community.

The Garden Project

Community food insecurity is growing. This is a major motivation for YOSA nutritional garden. A significant number of children who attend our activities leave homes on empty stomachs. They depend on YOSA meals. The YOSA garden is producing more than adequate vegetables to feed the learners and grannies who attend programmes at the Centre. We are also able to run a feeding programme in one of our supported schools. We are selling the excess vegetables to the community around us.



Yolanda, Karen, Sammy and Bridgety picking vegetables to prepare lunch for children at the Centre Finally

Our programming depends on the enabling grant from FNZ. Protracted funding and donations-in-kind from the YOSA Friendship Circle in Australia provide essential activities' support such as academic merit awards for 215 learners in July, feeding, dignity packs, stationery and more. The economy is not favourable at the moment but predictable partnership support is inspiring our programming.