

# THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

For Projects Abroad South Africa



## WHAT'S INSIDE?

- 01 Girl Guides visit Cape Town
- 03 Pen Pal Project
- 04 Music Project
- 06 Bo-Kaap Historic Tour
- 07 Editor's Note

Follow us on



> [www.projects-abroad.org.za](http://www.projects-abroad.org.za)

ProjectsAbroad

## Girl Guides visit Cape Town



Our Girl Guides getting their hands dirty at the Building Project.

Projects Abroad Cape Town had the opportunity of hosting a unique group of young girls who are a part of the popular Girl Guide group in the UK.

The Girl Guides that came to volunteer with us were made up of seven girls aged between 15 to 20 years old, and they were accompanied by their three elder leaders who mentor the girls at their programme back home.

The group volunteered in the Building and Care projects, where they took part in a variety of activities, that not only opened their eyes to the Cape Town life, but also brought them closer to each other.

Arriving in the country was a bit of a shock for the group, but 15-year-old Beth Conroy says that she was very surprised to see all the wonderful sights that Cape Town has to offer and couldn't wait to explore them. "I was excited to be embarking on this new journey" she says.

The group didn't waste any time in getting started on their work at the projects. They began with the Building project where they filled up sand bags that are used to build the wall, mixed cement and plastered the completed areas of the wall. While many would find the manual labor at the project daunting, the group worked closely together and this made their tasks easier to complete.

The Building Project, which is based in a township called Lavender Hill, is in the process of completing a community centre which will serve as a safe haven and playground for the children in the area. The crèche which is also based on the site is a big part of the project as volunteers lend a hand by looking after the children playing on the playground. During their breaks the Girl Guides would also join in on the fun and play with the children.

17 year old Lauren McGrath, who is has been a very active member of the Girl Guides, was amazed at the impact that can be made in just a week at the project. "The project was so worthwhile and we were clearly building and aiding the township to become a safer place for children. "she said. She loved that Projects Abroad aimed most of their projects at children, in order to educate and support them so they can have a more positive attitude which will eventually influence their futures. The skills that they learned at the project are definitely something that the girls will never forget. One of their leaders, Linda Durran from Austria says that it felt good to know that their hard work will be contributing to a care and community centre that will be there long after they're gone, and help others for generations to come.

During the second week of their visit they joined the Care Project which works with several crèches in the township of Vrygrond. This is where the group got first-hand experience on the kind of work that goes into volunteering at the crèches, which often don't have enough care takers for the large number of children that they have. "I spent every day in the same classroom, so I got to know a lot about each child and their personality." says Beth, who also took up different tasks, from teaching the children to doing activities like sweeping the classrooms to make sure that the children spent their time in a cleaner environment.

The Care Project was a huge favourite among the girls. Once they realised that they had free-time in the afternoons, the girls took up the initiative to start their own Afternoon Care programme which they called 'The Girl Guide Afternoons'. They, with the help of Projects Abroad, hired out a church hall which they used to facilitate a variety of creative classes with the children from Vrygrond.

The program started off with small numbers, but as each afternoon came, the number of children attending more than doubled. "Spending just a few hours a day with a group of children, and offering them attention and care can really go a long way," says Linda. Linda, along with the other two leaders, helped the girls plan activities such as making maracas, bracelets with string and rubber bands and playing games like cricket and skipping. The Girl Guiding project was without a doubt loved by the local community as it offered the children a safe and organised area where they could relax and have some fun.

Linda encourages other Care volunteers to take up the same initiative that the group did, by engaging other children of the community in something that will also keep them occupied in the afternoons when they come back from school. "This would be a huge benefit to all in the community and one that could also work well in the local schools." She added.

The Girl Guide group had the opportunity to experience two of our projects which enabled them to touch the lives of others through their work as volunteers.



Our Girl Guides play with the local Vrygrond children during their 'Girl Guide' afternoons.



Volunteer Coordinator, Vash Singh with Girl Guide leader, Linda Durran.

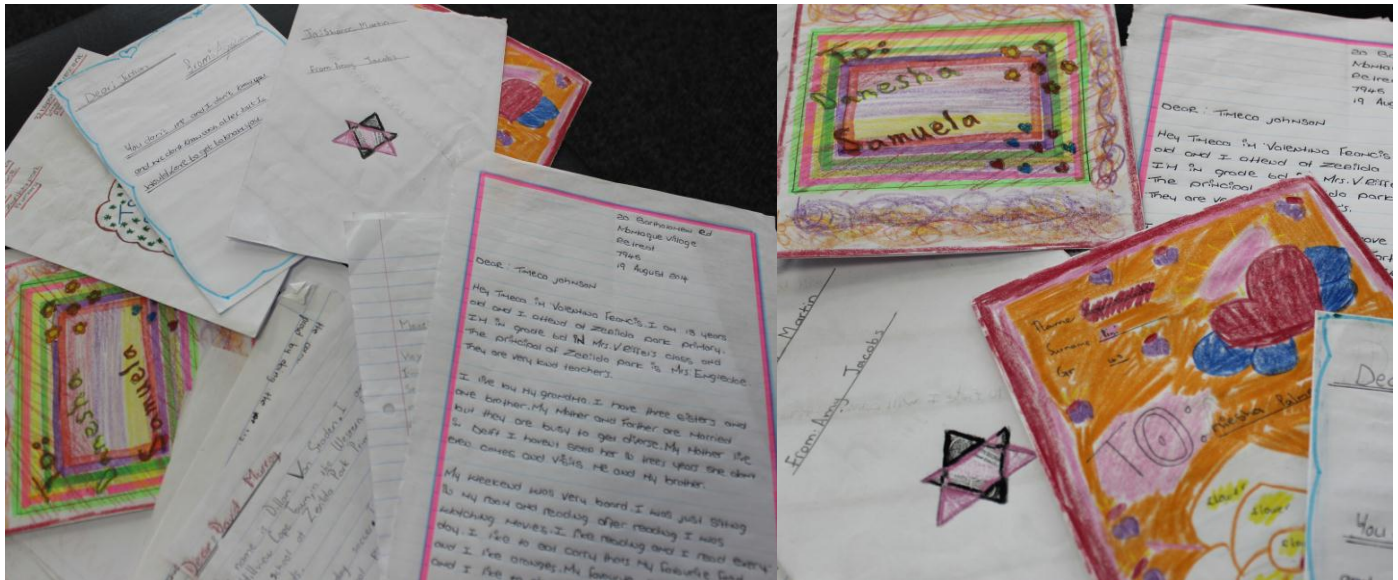


Girl Guides do some arts and crafts with the kids.

# Pen Pal Project: Forming friendships through education

Students from our projects in Jamaica and South Africa are brought together through the Pen Pal project which is aimed at improving the literacy skills of learners, whilst creating new friendships.

The children in Jamaica that are in the states care; face a number of challenges and low levels of literacy is one of them. South Africa also faces a similar issue with the levels of literacy in its Primary school learners being extremely low.



Letters from the children at Zerilda Primary School, which will be sent to our Teaching Project in Jamaica

The Garland Hall Baptist Orphanage in Jamaica found that 80% of the children were unable to read properly, while a study in South Africa found that 13% of learners in Grade 5 were completely illiterate. In order to improve the literacy skills of the learners in both countries, Projects Abroad began a Pen Pal Project, which allows the children to exchange letters and learn about different cultures at the same time.

The exciting cultural interaction and exchange among the children at the Garland Hall Baptist Orphanage and those in Zerilda Park Primary School in South Africa, enables new friendships to be created, while learners also learn new things about a different place and culture. With the help of volunteers at the projects, learners get the opportunity to choose from a series of topics such as, cultural tradition; icons/heroes and family; they also get to share such experiences with their pen pals, who would reply with their own unique story.

The learners aged between 1 to 15 years-old should, through this program, be able to read and write better, and this will be visible through their school performance and social interaction. The programs overall contribution is a great and fun way to address the existing literacy gaps in our countries.

We cannot wait to see the first results of this program and will hopefully introduce it in our other destinations.

# Music Project: Exploring the different sides of the industry

The experience gained through this project is like to no other as volunteers get hands on experience in the various aspects that the music industry has to offer, while working closely with the community.

Our project partner, Hyde Park Primary School welcomes volunteers to work with their students and school band through Projects Abroad. The volunteer placed at the school would work hand in hand with teachers in providing both practical and theoretical knowledge, by teaching the learners how to read and write music, as well as how to play certain musical instruments.

The volunteer gets to organise small workshops that he presents to the learners and this allows them to realise the difference that their knowledge and skills can make in the community.



It ultimately encourages and motivates the young children to take up creative opportunities that will open doors for them in the future.

Our Projects Abroad music website, Sounds of the World, works very closely with the Music Project. Through the site, our volunteers get introduced to aspects such as artist management, music production and event planning. Volunteers are encouraged to be constantly on the look-out for talented, unsigned artists who are unique to South Africa. They are then tasked with creating an artist profile or biography, which will be used to market and grow the artists fan base through the website.

With event planning being an exciting highlight of the project, the fortunate first volunteer who had a go at it was our recent volunteer Sean Hugo, who is a Music Management and Studio Production student in the UK. Sean wanted to do something different and meaningful with his time and that is when he decided to sign up with Projects Abroad., He had already fallen in love with Cape Town through his previous visits with his family, so the opportunity to be in this beautiful city whilst volunteering was something he could not decline.

Volunteers coming from another country always experience some form of cultural difference when arriving in Cape Town, and surprisingly enough Sean, a South African, had a similar experience when he got the opportunity to live and work in the townships. Many South Africans know of the townships but have never experienced what life is like there. Sean realised that he himself had a stereotypical view of the townships and was surprised to find that the area he lived in, Parkwood, was far different from what he thought it would be like. "I was very insecure and unsure about staying there, but my host family and the community really opened my eyes to a different way of life," he says.

Sean is currently doing his Honours in Music Management and Studio Production and knew that he could make a great impact by joining the music project; this would also enable him to learn more about his field of study and to find ways that he could apply this knowledge. Even though he felt a lot of pressure being the first volunteer to plan an event for the project, he felt that the responsibility allowed him to share his unique ideas which would direct the project for future volunteers.

“Being a part of this project really made me realise there are so many potential careers within the music industry, it’s definitely helped me understand which particular field I would be interested in working in.”

A day in the life of a Music Project volunteer was always busy. Sean would work on the Sounds of The World artist profiles that are featured on the site, help the local school, Hyde Park Primary, with their band practises and organising a live event with the Sounds of the World artists. He particularly enjoyed interviewing the various artists and the rush that came with organising the live session’s event. “I loved watching it all come together, but mainly because it gave local artists a platform to showcase their exceptional talent.”

When asked what advice he would like to give to future music volunteers, he said that volunteering is all about how much you want to do for others. The more you do the more impact you will make and the more rewarding your experience will be. The music project really opens you up to a different way of doing things, it might take a little more effort and dedication, but seeing the end product come together makes it worthwhile.”

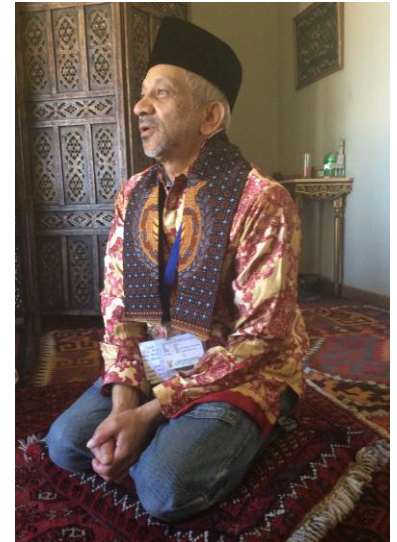
Sean helped organise the first ever Sounds of the World music event, which was a great success. The show featured performances from local unsigned artists and Sounds of the World artists. The audience was entertained with genres of music ranging from RnB to soul and pop. We hope to with the help of future volunteers to make this event one of many more to come.

# Bo-Kaap Tour: Discovering the myths and mysteries of the Cape Malay



This historical tour shares one of the many hidden stories that makes Cape Town what it is today.

The Cape Malay history dates as far back as 1856 with the first group that consisted of exiled slaves and travellers coming from Malaysia, Indonesia and Madagascar. They were mostly of the Islam religion with some that studied Arabic and traditional religious sciences in Mecca, which is the root of many of their cultural practises today.

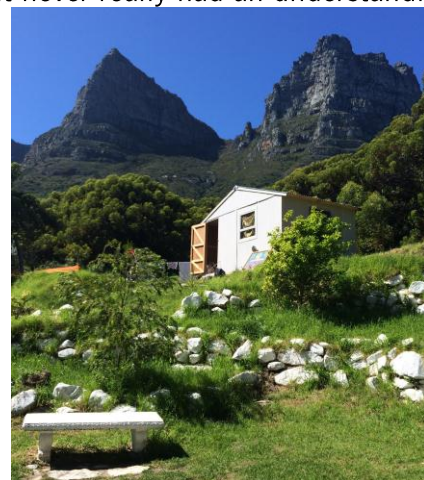


From the small busy streets of Bo-Kaap, where the Bo-Kaap Historical Museum is based, to the tranquil and scenic mountain views of Hout bay where the shrine of one of the earliest prophets was buried; there are so many historical places that give insight on the Cape Malay religious history.

One of the interesting facts that I learnt of, was about the infamous Cape Town Minstrels which sees groups of musical performers from the Cape Coloured community sporting brightly coloured suits, face paints and joyfully parading up and down the city centre streets. The festivity which began in the 1830's was celebrated by the slaves of that time. They had one day off in the year when they could relax and have a good time, and that was on the second of January, when their masters were still exhausted from their new year's celebrations. This then became a yearly tradition which has been continued to this day.

After this excursion I got to enjoy a unique Malay inspired lunch of samoosas, bobotie and bobah (a delicious creamy desert), while an Imaam (priest) from the local mosque shared his amazing story of how he discovered his family lineage of his spiritual practice and traditions.

I was surely surprised at this unique history that many of our history books are yet to document; it definitely gave me insight on the many traditions that I often witnessed, but never really had an understanding of.



## Editor's Note

Our country is filled with so much diversity which truly lives up to its title as the Rainbow Nation.

With so many different cultures, it's always intriguing to discover new things about our people and their history, which make us to be the wonderful nation that we are today.

My recent tour of the Bo-Kaap and its history was very eye-opening; as the colourful Cape Malay culture is truly something worth celebrating with Heritage Day as a holiday that reminds us of our unique cultural heritage.



Kay Kekana, Communications Officer

Better known as Braai day, many South Africans celebrate this day by having a braai (BBQ), with friends and family, and even with our many different celebrations and practices; to braai is the one thing that is enjoyed by all South Africans. This day is always a great opportunity for us to share our stories and celebrate its beauty.

Our Pen Pal Project is finding new ways to educate and create friendships between school children, who get an opportunity to learn about others who come from a different life and country as themselves. The simple interaction between the two groups of children has the potential to unlock their minds to a bigger world that they will soon realise is within their grasp. Introducing our children to such initiatives is what will one day guarantee us of a world free of hate and discrimination.