



UPLIFTING SOUTH AFRICA'S YOUTH: CAPE KIDS BREAKS THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE AND TRAUMA

WITH A PHILOSOPHY THAT PROMOTES RESTORATIVE DISCIPLINE AND TRAUMA-AWARE EDUCATION, SOUTH AFRICA'S CAPE KIDS FOUNDATION IS PROVIDING HOLISTIC SUPPORT AND HIGH-QUALITY ACADEMIC TEACHING TO UNDER-SERVED YOUNG PEOPLE FROM THE CAPE FLATS TOWNSHIPS, WHERE THEY HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO GANG VIOLENCE, DRUG ABUSE, FAMILY INSTABILITY, AND MENTAL STRESS. BY GIVING STUDENTS THE SUPPORT NEEDED TO ACHIEVE EMOTIONAL STRENGTH AND EXCELLENCE IN ACADEMIC ATTAINMENT, THE FOUNDATION AIMS TO CHANGE THEIR LIVES AND INTERRUPT THE INTER-GENERATIONAL CYCLE OF POVERTY, VIOLENCE, AND TRAUMA.

Cape Kids Foundation (CKF) began its work in 2017, when Vicky Bauer, the foundation's director, teamed up with two friends, Dave and Carol Froneman, and started providing financial support to families and local grassroots organizations helping under-served young people to succeed in school. However, on hearing about

individual teens who were determined to improve their own lives, the team decided to change direction.

The new approach involved supporting those young individuals directly—sponsoring their studies, ensuring they had books, uniforms and tech devices, and



accommodating some of them in a house where they were surrounded by supportive adults. The team soon saw that those living in the house found it easier to succeed than those in campus residences or living within the townships. That was when the idea for bringing education and therapy in-house—the CKF Community model—was born. “We were emulating the power of a high-functioning family,” says Bauer. “And when you have the support of family, you can do anything.”

HANDS-ON AND PERSONAL

Vicky Bauer’s passion for making a difference emerged long before she started the foundation. Born in the UK, she grew up in South Africa and was acutely aware of the vast opportunity gaps between the haves and have-nots resulting from the country’s racist history. “I have a strong sense of responsibility for the people whose shoulders we’ve been standing on—and it’s people of color,” she says.

Bauer saw the challenges facing Black South Africans firsthand while volunteering at a halfway home for children abandoned because they had HIV/AIDS. “That

was my first taste of the fact that there was a whole world out there that I had no knowledge of because of my own economic security,” she recalls.

PARTNERING WITH MYRIAD USA FOR GLOBAL IMPACT

After moving to the U.S., Bauer and her husband Peter established a family foundation, the Metta Charitable Foundation, and began developing their philanthropic strategy. With a focus on global impact, particularly concerning children and youth, sustainability, and environmental justice, they created the Metta Charitable Donor Advised Fund at Myriad USA to organize their giving in a simple and flexible manner to South African nonprofits such as Cape Kids Foundation, Tomorrow’s Trust, UTurn and the Centre for Animal Rehabilitation and Education.

The American Friends Fund of Cape Kids Foundation was also established at Myriad USA to allow other individual donors in the U.S., beyond the Bauers, to make tax-deductible donations to the fund.

While she could have donated to feeding programs or larger youth charities, Bauer felt compelled to address the tougher problems. “It doesn’t really tackle the generational trauma and the dysfunctionality of society due to racism,” she says. Her friends, the Fronemans, felt the same.

“We wanted to give at the grassroots level, to work with people we knew within the townships, and to see the change we were making every day,” she explains. “So, we knew from the beginning that it was going to be personal.”

YOUNG PEOPLE FACING TOUGH CHALLENGES

South Africa is a country with a large youth population—but also one of the world’s highest youth unemployment rates, with 61% of people aged between 15 and 24 unemployed, according to the World Economic Forum. And the inability to find a job often stems from the severe challenges young people face in the communities where they live.

Many lack the parental support or adult mentorship that is critical to children’s development, says Bauer. With fathers who are absent or have died through gang violence or substance abuse, many young people are brought up by single mothers, grandmothers, or aunts. “Homes are run by women in environments that are ruled by gangs and are not safe,” she explains.

And for parents or guardians, the constant fear is that their children will either be caught in the crossfire of community conflict or will be recruited by gangs, severely constraining their lives. “It’s an ecosystem



that’s destined to rid those children of any future,” she says.

However, while male violence and domestic abuse are rife, Bauer believes it is important not to assign blame. “There can’t be judgment of those men,” she stresses. “Because, as a result of generations of racism, they are trying to survive and to belong.”

She sees the biggest problem as a generational spiral through which today’s young people become tomorrow’s parents—inheriting and passing on to their children all the same challenges, behaviors, and traumas of the previous generation.

“I’D LIKE THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE COME THROUGH CAPE KIDS FOUNDATION TO SHARE WHAT THEY HAVE LEARNED, TO SHARE THEIR LOVE, COMPASSION, AND WISDOM, AND TO ALWAYS PASS IT FORWARD IN THEIR COMMUNITY.”

VICKY BAUER

For Bauer and her colleagues, solutions are not easy, but the goal is certain: to break this cycle of trauma and steering children away from their current life trajectories so that they can achieve emotional stability and financial independence, and as a result lead better lives and free their future families from intergenerational trauma and abuse.

THE POWER OF FAMILY SUPPORT

While the CKF model is always evolving, the team has a clear vision of what works. And that is offering a small group of determined students a combination of academic opportunity, emotional healing, and intensive mentoring in a safe place that has a strongly supportive environment similar to that of a loving family. Staff members range from mentors, counselors, tutors, and life advisors to transport managers, nutrition providers, healthcare coordinators, and dorm parents.

The foundation identifies 14-year-olds who, importantly, demonstrate their own appetite for learning and for changing the trajectory of their lives. “They don’t have to be book smart, they have to be determined,” says Bauer. Candidates for the program are those who “against all odds are making their way to school and finding a safe place to do homework.”

With up to 24 students—in both high school and tertiary education—the foundation has its own institutions, Alex School and Alex Village, and places a strong emphasis on trauma counseling as well as academic instruction. Students spend five days a week at the school and live at CKF, going home over weekends or staying on campus if home is unsafe.

THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF IMPACT

The Cape Kids Foundation cohort is small and intentionally so, enabling each student to receive intensive counseling and teaching. “We knew that to go ‘few and focused’ was something we wanted to do,” says Bauer.

The foundation has expanded its reach by offering programs to the student’s extended family: a monthly Women’s Group for mothers, grandmothers, and aunts

of the enrolled students in a safe space with nutrition and a counsellor who encourages deep conversation and much needed connection, an afternoon CKF Learning Centre for siblings ranging in age from 6 years to 14 years focused on math, reading skills and group therapy work and the CKF Pre School for siblings 3 years to 6 years old. It plans to add a Men’s Group for the men in students’ lives and to foster an alumni network, which will grow as more students graduate.

While achieving academic and employment success is critical for individuals, Bauer sees Cape Kids Foundation as playing a broader role in helping change the nature of society. Through a ripple effect, each young person who acquires respect for knowledge and learning, leaves violence behind, and gains emotional stability is someone who will pass that on to the rest of their family and to the children they will nurture as adults.

“For us, success is being able to support yourself, yet it’s also about softening the environment you live in and choosing an alternative to violence in all its shapes and forms,” says Bauer. “It’s about making the community just that bit kinder and safer.”

www.capekidsfoundation.com

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