

Die kinderversorger The child care worker

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHILD CARE WORKERS

Action Care Trust to raise R1 Million Annually for NACCW

At a press conference at the Rand Afrikaans University on October 27 Action Care Trust, a promotional and fund-raising organisation for the NACCW, was launched before the nation's newspapers, radio and TV. Present were well-known TV presenter, Marius du Plooy, and Susanne Maree, also of SATV, who make up the Action Care Trust team. Representing the NACCW were National Chairman Ernie Nighthingale, National Director Brian Gannon, Dr. Rudolph van Niekerk who is Chairman of the Transvaal Regional Executive, Molly Painter, child care training officer for the Transvaal attached to RAU, and Johann Mostert, also of the Transvaal Executive.

Introducing the conference, Dr van Niekerk said that the child care profession in South Africa continued to struggle against various handicaps such as shortages of trained staff, and that talking about it would not give the children in care a better deal. Children's homes were no longer orphanages or simply homes for poor children, and needed to realise that they were expected to provide specialist care for troubled and disturbed children. Food, clothing and shelter were only the beginning of the story. To ensure that each and every child's needs were met demanded a major development in child care services in this country.



A working group of the Transvaal Executive, Johann Mostert, Jackie Michael, Rudolph van Niekerk and Di Levine, meet with the National Director to plan the press conference for the launching of Action Care Trust.

Ernie Nighthingale stated that while manpower and training were major issues in South Africa today, the child care profession was one of the worst served in this regard. It was disturbing that all recent research showed that children's homes were not in a position to appoint staff with either training or experience. Also, the profession still lost one-third of its staff every year, and this had an on-going tragic effect on the children who suffered repeatedly broken relationships with adults.

Molly Painter felt that while it was encouraging that there were 250 child care workers receiving formal training, this was still a small fraction of child care workers in South Africa. The whole infrastructure of training and staff recruitment needed radical development.



1984

Die NVK Kerskaartjie

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seen children being kept in limbo through hesitancy, regard for parents' rights, lengthy discourse and hence slow, bureaucratic decision-making. Of course, every system has its faults, and I have been able to see the benefits of the South African Place of Safety which at least fulfils a holding function while removal issues are being finalised.

A major function of the child care worker in South Africa is that of assessment. Many children's homes do not have access to a clinical psychologist and children are accepted into homes on the basis of sometimes nebulous reports by social workers, and so workers must observe and assess children on the unit before treatment planning by the staff team can take place. Not so in Oregon, where the child arrives on the unit only after extensive interviews and testing by intake workers, family counsellors, consultant psychiatrists and educational diagnosticians. At that point an extensive task definition is already established, and the treatment co-ordinator must produce a working plan and step-by-step methods for working with the child. Thus the child care worker is able to focus immediately on the problems as well as the strengths of the child, and care is taken that the tasks expected of the child care worker are within his professional understanding and expertise.



Staff at the Friedrich Schweizer Kinderheim in Kenilworth, recently visited by the Director, Sybille Otto, child care worker, Sandy Spence, social worker, and Heide Hayn, principal, with her husband Hartmut.

Johann Mostert expressed the view that training could not be limited to child care workers, but that management committees also needed constant support and information for their role as planners and providers for child care programmes. In effect the NACCW had to reach almost as many management committee members as child care workers.

Brian Gannon expressed disappointment that the issues being raised by other speakers were the same today as at the 1951 Kimberley conference on children's homes 33 years before. With millions being spent annually on sports sponsorships, he questioned whether South Africa had its priorities right. In his view the children's home problem in South Africa was still small enough to represent a reachable goal. "There are larger issues in this country which will take much of our attention for years to come, such as education and housing, but let us at least get our services for institutionalised children in order today. Right now South Africa cannot be entirely proud of its children's service."

Action Care Trust, headed up by Marius du Plooy and Susanne Marée, aims to raise R1 million a year for the NACCW. Priority spending will go to such areas as creating a

training infrastructure for child care (including training bursaries for children's homes so that newly-appointed staff may undergo training before being allowed to practise alone), the appointment of Regional Directors (at present the National Director is expected to cover all four regions and the rural areas), regional services including recruitment and screening of staff and professional services for children in homes, as well as publications and research.

Action Care Trust is the brain-child of Dr Rudolph van Niekerk, Chairman of the Transvaal Region. "I have watched with increasing admiration what the children's homes in South Africa do on shoe-string budgets. I have watched with increasing amazement what the NACCW has achieved with virtually no budget at all. In South Africa there is no shortage of the will to care for children, and no shortage of the will to care for the care-givers — but the shortage of money and manpower has us all caught up in our own whirlpools. The task is so great that it is only a massive input of money and manpower today which will help us all reach our goal of better child care services in this country. For the 20 000 children living in our institutions today, tomorrow will be too late."



Merle Allsopp, senior child care worker at St Michael's Home in Cape Town, is on a one year's ILEX exchange programme working in a children's treatment centre in the U.S.A.

Accountability and Assessment

There's been a positive and exciting growth of growing familiarity with the agency for which I work and more contact with child care generally in the state of Oregon. I have become aware of the importance attached to accountability in child and youth work in this country, an issue very superficially addressed in South Africa.

By accountability I refer to individual child care workers' responsibility for their actions and agencies' responsibility both to parents and the community for the provision of effective treatment. Community and consumer attitudes — the lawsuit

mentality — certainly underlie this emphasis in the USA, and it appears to me that covering oneself for all ones actions when working with other people's children can only be positive.

The attitude of accountability is evident in many ways here at Edgefield Lodge, the writing of special incident reports where, by any out-of-the-ordinary happening is recorded and filed; weekly behaviour summaries which enable anyone glancing at a file immediately to discern problem areas being worked on. It involves more paper work, but this is justified by the advantages of continuity and credibility.

South African child care workers who spend such long periods in direct work with children find it hard to give high priority to this aspect and it tends to be neglected. But verbal reports to superiors are insufficient in an agency with professional standards like this and whose actions must be open to scrutiny by both friend and foe.

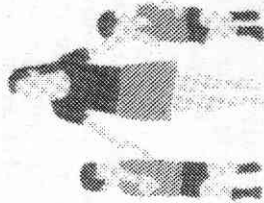
Many rules of procedure relating to staff interaction with children result from this attitude towards accountability. I was amazed, for instance, that when children were swimming, a ratio of one adult to three children had to be maintained — obviously a sensible ruling, but one which would be totally impractical in a South African setting.

The rights of the child are in many ways protected by an attitude of caution like this. Many American children appear to have a knowledge of their rights and what they can expect in treatment, which seems to me very positive, though often used in a calculating way by children. Staff-child ratios obviously feature very strongly in this issue. In a recent incident of restraint a child accused the child care worker of abusing him — and immediately there was a supervisor present on the spot to observe the actions of the child care worker, and to add an element of reality to the child's perception of what was taking place.

There are situations where children fall victim to an over-cautious system. Oregon's policy is to maintain a child in his own home wherever possible, and whilst I am in agreement with such a policy, I have

Child Care Workers

Applications are invited from people with appropriate training to join a multidisciplinary team working with children of all ages. Preference will be given to applicants who are in possession of a driver's licence. Telephone the Principal on 021-638-3127 for an Application Form.



Annie Starck Village

Action Care Trust Welcomed

The launching of Action Care Trust in Johannesburg on September 27th represents probably the most important event in the NACCW's history. The National Executive has identified a number of major programmes for the benefit of the child care service in South Africa which until now have been but impossible dreams.

The task of reaching all child care workers at all levels, both urban and rural, with opportunities for training has long been high on the list of NACCW priorities. The appointment of regional directors together with the development of personal, written, audio-visual and video training material will, for the first time, enable many children's homes to benefit from child care training.

As important will be the development of centralised and itinerant services for management, staff and children. Recruitment, selection and orientation training of staff will represent an invaluable service to management. The provision of clinical services for children for those institutions which cannot afford the services of professional staff for assessment, treatment and programme guidance has been a long-felt need.

A major item of expense will be training bursaries payable to children's homes enabling them to support child care workers in training before they are placed in active posts. The NACCW feels very strongly that as in any other profession, newly-appointed staff should undergo basic training and have the opportunity to work under the supervision of senior workers for a period of time before being placed in positions of responsibility, but few management committees can afford the luxury of non-active staff. Training subsidies will for the first time make this possible.

Other areas which will benefit from the fund-raising activities of Action Care Trust

will be child care research, the development of the Institute of Child Care, extensions to the publications and media of the NACCW (including the Child Care Worker journal), and opportunities for overseas exchange programmes for principals, social workers and child care workers.

With probably R40 million already being spent annually in residential institutions for children, the additional R1 million available to the NACCW through Action Care Trust will make possible the necessary ancillary services to a profession which has for too long been expected to operate on a shoe-string budget. To mix metaphors, the boot is now on the other foot.

1985 National Conference being Planned

Durban will host the 1985 Biennial National Conference from 24 to 26 September 1985 at the Caister Hotel in Musgrave Road, Berea. The planning committee is already hard at work on the arrangements and programme around the theme: Residential Care — The Dilemma of Risk.

Little Change in Regional Executives

At the time of going to press, the Biennial General Meetings of three of the NACCW Regions have been held and new committees elected. The following office bearers were elected:

Natal: Chairman: Ernie Nightingale, Principal of Ethelbert Children's Home; Vice-Chairman: Baia Mudaly, Director of Durban Indian Child Welfare Society; Secretary: Dr Jeannie Roberts, University of Durban-Westville; Treasurer: Muffie White, Principal of Wylie House.

Western Cape: Chairman: Vivien Lewis, Principal of St Michael's Children's Home; Vice-Chairman: Ashley Theron, Principal of Child Welfare Society's Annie Starck

Village; Secretary: Derek Group, Principal of Boys Town Duin en Dal; Treasurer: John Saxey, National Treasurer of the NACCW.

Eastern Province: Chairman: Roger Pitt, Principal of Kingwilliamstown Children's Home; Secretary: Lesley du Toit, social worker at the same children's home; Treasurer: Fred Wells, Principal of the Eastern Province Children's Home.

Phalo Children's Home AGM

The Annual General Meeting of Phalo Children's Home, the first children's home for black children being built in the Cape Province at Grahamstown, was held on 22 September. Members were welcomed by the Hon. Mr B. Zondani, mayor of Rini and long associated with the planning of Phalo. Roger Pitt, Chairman of the Eastern Province Executive of the NACCW, addressed the meeting on Appointing Competent Staff for our Children's Home.

Staff and Programme Development Needed says Tony Baker

Tony Baker, principal of St Nicolas Home in Johannesburg, has just returned from a trip around South Africa during which he visited a number of Anglican children's homes at the request of Anglicare. He concludes that children now being admitted to South African children's homes present a whole new challenge to management and staff and that existing programmes need careful planning and revision if the needs being presented are to be adequately met. He held discussions with the National Director of the NACCW in Cape Town and has also met with state department officials, and feels that children's homes need to give thought to the alternatives of long-term care and short-term, more intensive programmes. In either case, present facilities and staffing designs are in need of development, and he hopes to implement some of his findings at St Nicolas Home.

Conference on Alternatives in Black Child Care

November will see an adventurous coming together of child care authorities from both the public and private sectors, seeking the way ahead for black child care in Southern Africa.

The NACCW has called a round table conference to take place in East London on November 1st and 2nd. Representatives from state departments of Co-operation & Development as well as of Health & Welfare in the Republic and the independent states have been invited along with child welfare authorities, organisations running or planning homes for black children, community organisations such as the Urban Foundation and housing and local government representatives.

Urban black communities are presenting residential child care needs similar to those of the white and coloured communities. Few institutions exist, and those which do are full. The demand is difficult to establish since social workers, knowing



that there are no places, do not apply for them. Newly-built children's homes tend to fill up in a matter of days. It is increasingly difficult to find adoptive or foster homes and children tend to remain for long periods in institutions, thus 'clogging' them up.

If black child care demands are going to equal those for whites and coloureds, namely 1 in 1 000 of the child population, then the provision of facilities becomes urgent.

The questions arise: How do we estimate future demand? Can the traditional children's home model, by itself, efficiently and economically meet the demands? Is it in any case a desirable model? What are the constraints upon alternative models?

The NACCW is assembling for the conference an information base on attempts made to solve the problem in other countries, from Swaziland and Zimbabwe in the south to Israel and Egypt in the north. The working group will share available information and views, explore the above questions and any others which might arise, and propose avenues for further investigation and action.

How We See Ourselves

Part of a presentation to the recent Regional Conference of the NACCW's Western Cape Region by a group of child care workers from Letleboem House, Annie Starck Village, St Michael's Home and Boys Town.

Principals: Every self-respecting child care worker knows that principals are those people who get brilliant ideas — which to us mean one thing: more work. When they call a meeting to discuss team-work, it means going in with our own ideas — and coming out with theirs!

Social Workers: When they get brilliant ideas they tell us about them — and then go

home and leave us to carry them out! The way they manage to side-step issues, they have (in Woody Allen's words) the head of a student and the body of a crab.

Psychologists: They are the people who put the labels and tags on to what we've been doing for years anyway. If things don't go according to the book, they empathise and suggest that we 'work through it'. They are the only people we know who, when we ask for one answer, come up with fifty more questions!

Committee Members: The people who never appear on the scene when we need them to — and even if they did, we wouldn't know them. They expect us to do all the work all the time — and wonder why we have to spend money to do so. They are so very adept at employing staff on the basis of 'two for the price of one'.

How the kids see us: Big voices, big power, big people, jailers, nannies, fools. Father Christmas, father confessors, father figures, Mother earthers, Mother Hubbards and mother hens. They see us as instant transport, instant therapists, instant financiers, instant educators, instant gratifiers, instant healers, instant problem-solvers and instant coffee. As non-sleepers, non-weepers, non-sickers, non-reactors, non-drinkers, non-smokers, non-human and nonsense.

How we see ourselves: Lay nurses, lay counsellors, lay teachers, lay therapists, lay preachers, lay sex educators, lay cooks, lay cleaners, lay bus drivers, lay interior decorators, lay dressmakers, lay gardeners, lay pool cleaners. That's 'lay, not 'luf'. We are also lay swimming instructors, sports directors and handymen, lay vets and crafts specialists, veterinarians and pet undertakers, lay telephonists, typists, public relations officers and entrepreneurs — and geniuses in making ends meet.

We also think we are indispensable, held responsible for everything that goes wrong and don't get enough credit for what goes right.

In spite of all this, we really try to comfort often, care always — and criticise never!

Anton & Maria

'n Dialoog Reeks oor Supervisie

Anton: My wêreld, Maria, jy lyk omgekrap.
Maria: Ja! Die kinders word net te veel vir my.

Anton: Plaas die kinders baie druk op jou?
Maria: Die kinders maak my mal. Hulle is net nie na my nie.

Anton: Wil jy my vertel wat gebeur het?
Maria: Ek het al soveel keer vir die kinders gesê hoe om hulle langs die tafel te gedra, maar net vanoggend het Jan sovaar weer met sy lomp maniere die melk omgestamp.

Anton: Humm...
Maria: Ek was so kwaad dat ek op hom begin skree het. Hy't toe uitgestorm en die deur agter hom toegeklap. Toe het die anders ook rusteloos en onbanteerbaar begin raak.

Anton: Jy voel dat jy beheer verloor het oor die situasie?
Maria: Ja... wel, dit is al die hele week dat die kinders my so uitlart.

Anton: Dit was 'n moeilike week vir jou.
Maria: Ek weet nie wat gaan met die kinders aan nie.

Anton: Hoe was jy die afgelope week?
Maria: Ag, ek voel so afgemat. Ek weet nie.

Anton: Voel jy bekommerd oor jousself?
Maria: Ja, alles gaan verkeerd!

Anton: Alles? Jy is ook betrokke in die musiekwêreld. Gaan dinge daar ook verkeerd?

Maria: Ek kon vir die afgelope paar weke nie daarby uitkom nie. Ek kon nie eers my fiksheidklasse bywoon nie.

Anton: So wat gebeur dan met jou aftaaf?
Maria: Ek voel so moeg dat ek heeldag slaap!

Anton: Dit lyk asof jy van die dinge wat jou stimuleer afskeep.

Maria: Ja, ek het... (Lag verlee) Is dit die "burn-out" sindroom waarvan ons so baie hoor?

Anton: Ja dit kan wees, Maria. Dit is ons verantwoordelikheid om onself instand te hou. Ons moet al die areas in ons lewe, werk en ontspanning lewendig hou — anders krimp ons wêreld tot die grootte van ons woon-êreheid.

Maria: Ja, ek verstaan. En as dinge dan in die huis verkeerd loop, dan voel dit asof ons hele wêreld verkeerd is.

Anton: Wat nou van Jan?
Maria: Ek was moeg. Ek het oorreageer. Ek moet dinge in perspektief sien... Ek sal daadwerklike pogings moet aanwend om nie my ander belangstellings af te skeep nie.

Anton: Ons is in die eerste plek mense, en daarna kinderversorgers.

Maria: Ek sien nou dinge in 'n ander lig. Dankie.

The child care worker Die kinderversorger

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