

MASI MAIL



Masiphumelele Corporation and Trust

Masicorp Newsletter - October 2011 'Special' Edition

A short note from the editor

Welcome to a very special edition of Masi Mail. Instead of our planned October issue of general Masicorp news we have decided to do a special feature on the recent Royal visit of the Duchess of Cornwall to Masi. Do not fear though, we'll be back in December with another issue jam packed full of news and the usual sections just in time for your perusal over the Christmas holidays. In the meantime happy reading.

Go well
Keith

Masiphumelele puts on a Royal welcome

words by Jill Stirrup & Keith Bohannon, photographs by Sean Wilson



The Duchess arrives at Masi to a warm welcome from Jill and Doreen

On November 5th 2011 Masicorp was proud to welcome Her Royal Highness (HRH) the Duchess of Cornwall, on her visit to Masiphumelele, Hosted by our own Jill Stirrup, who you may remember received an MBE in June for work on Masicorp's bursary program. The Duchess visited Doreen's Ikhaya Labantwana crèche, met with the 'Seedlings' project team and visited Nondeybo's showroom - where she did a little shopping! Her final stop was Masiphumelele Library where she met our bursary students and a number of the groups active in the library. The visit ended in style as the Girls' Group entertained everybody with an exuberant display of modern dance. It turned out to be a wonderful day and this is how it all unfolded...

After weeks of careful preparation and planning, many conversations, visits and checks it all came together and even the unpredictable Cape weather decided it would behave just in time for the big day. The sweeping, painting, decorating and cooking was all done, the thinly cut sandwiches and tiny pop in the mouth cakes were plated and ready to eat and there was a palpable air of excitement for all those involved in the preparations. There was no doubt Masi was going to be dressed to impress!

Jill recalls the atmosphere of the build up: "My job was to meet, greet and introduce HRH to people who work hard to make a difference in Masi. What to wear?, how do I address her?, is it Marm or Mam?, how do I introduce her to all the people on the list? and worst of all would I go blank and forget somebody's name? Then the call came, "they are 10 minutes away", but no, they had already turned in Pokela Road and in seconds the cavalcade was at the gate. HRH stepped out of the limo, a little curtsy and a warm hand shake and the show began. Big smiles, introduction to Doreen looking wonderful in traditional dress and on to Elize and Nontseko with the cameras flashing. HRH moved into the crèche and immediately sat down on a tiny plastic chair with Doreen beside her. A little voice piped up saying, "Hello Camilla". For me this is one of the great moments of the day. HRH spoke very quietly to the children and they loved her."





The Duchess with Doreen and children at Ikhaya Labantwana

As the cavalcade moved on through Masi it certainly sparked the interest of many of the community. News of the visit had been a closely guarded secret, except for those directly involved, so most people didn't know what was happening or why Masi had suddenly become the centre of Cape Town's (and the UK's) media attention. Next stop on the tour was Nondeybo Art. Nondeybo's show room looked very colourful donned out with examples of her beautiful table cloth designs on the walls. Nondeybo spoke confidently about how it all started and she invited HRH into the workshop to meet the painters and demonstrate the process. Then to everyone's surprise as the crowd was about to move on the Duchess was taken by the arm and moved swiftly back into the showroom. Astonishment all round. Apparently HRH's PA had arranged a private shopping opportunity for the royal party! The door opened and HRH came out with a big smile and said "How wonderful, I've just done all my Christmas shopping". Maybe Prince Charles will be getting a hand painted apron with a giraffe on it for Christmas - just the thing for all those barbecues on the lawn at Clarence House.



The Duchess gets a lesson in African cloth painting from Nondeybo and her staff

Last stop on the tour was the Library where there were a lot more onlookers gathered now, the crowds were growing. The Duchess met with library staff (Sue, Thando, Veronica and Nosakhe) and some of the Masicorp bursary students (Loyiso, Ziyana and Seni) before moving upstairs to the computer room where HRH admitted that she was, "hopeless with technology". She had no need to worry because Nyasha and Xolani were there with their usual charming smiles and they told the group all about the courses. HRH walked over to the students at their computers and went round the room and managed as ever to speak very quietly to each one. Downstairs again and HRH had a chat with Polly, then moved to the Ikamvaites table and sat down with Zoe and once again talked to the students.



Jill and Marjan introduce the Duchess to some of our bursary students - Loyiso, Ziyana and Seni





HRH chats with some students in Masi library

By now the library was packed to the rafters and introduced by Sue the party moved around a number of groups - the Wordworks table, the Lalela Art group, the Adult literacy group and then the grande finale - the Girls Group who entertained everybody with their exuberant display of modern dance. In what seemed to go in flash it was already time to say goodbye. HRH moved with the crowd towards the door where a very tall policeman from Buckingham Palace was entertaining everybody with his arm around Veronica, much to the delight and knowing looks from HRH. Farewells, thanks for coming and lots and lots of happy people shouting and waving - and they were gone!



The Duchess with the Masi Girl's Group after their performance

All in all the visit was a big success leaving wonderful memories of the day for all those involved and also providing a great opportunity to celebrate, promote and acknowledge all the good work that is going on in Masi.

Of course none of this would be possible without the hard work on many people so a huge thanks to all those who worked behind the scenes - too many to mention here. A special note of thanks should go to Al Richie for dealing with all the planning and consulate meetings - without his effort this visit would not have been possible.