

THE SISANDA FUNDAYTION TIME CAPSULE

A HISTORY:
CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF
BUILDING RESILIENCE
THROUGH PLAY
2009 - 2024





**"PLAY
IS THE HIGHEST FORM OF
RESEARCH"**

- ALBERT EINSTEIN

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THEN . . .

. . . NOW



SOME INSPIRATION FOR YOU

#Ride4Resilience 



Connect
Play
Inspire



connecting through play

#Ride4Resilience 

Resilience isn't just
about surviving.
it's about Thriving



#Ride4Resilience 

Celebrate every win
no matter how small



#Ride4Resilience 

It always seems
impossible until
it is done

Nelson Mandela





#Ride4Resilience 




You just can't beat
the person who
never gives up



#Ride4Resilience 



Breathe.
Inhale the future
Exhale the past



TO BE TRULY SEEN AND VALUED

DEAR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS,

Sisanda FunDaytion has blossomed from an embryonic idea into a fabulous fifteen-year-old teenager. So, we're taking a moment to feel proud, and to thank each of you for your individual contributions. Your time, energy, financial assistance and connections have helped us to become the resilient organisation we are today. We've had numerous magical and fun experiences, extreme highs and lows, as well as many profound moments, but we've remained steadfast in our drive to add goodness to the world. Well done us! And well done you!



To celebrate this milestone and to express our gratitude for each and every person who has contributed to our success, we've embarked on this special commemorative project: a 15-year 'time capsule' to share our highlights, achievements and insights.

We've included many positive stories and testimonials from the children, families, volunteers, and partners who have been instrumental in shaping who we are. Hopefully, we'll make some new friends along the way.

Your support has been the bedrock of our mission to bring joy to vulnerable children and youth in Cape Town, South Africa, and to change their future outlook. Thank you for all your contributions, for believing in our mission and the importance of play.



Connecting Through Play has been the invisible thread weaving the tapestry of our community together. Through play, we celebrate inclusion, embrace diversity, and foster connections across generations, backgrounds, and talents. It's this thread that ensures every individual feels not just noticed, but truly seen and valued.



WITH HEARTFELT GRATITUDE FROM
THE SISANDA FUNDAYTION TEAM,

**NICKY SEYMOUR (DIRECTOR AND CO-FOUNDER),
MARTHA EVANS (CO-FOUNDER AND TRUSTEE),
MELISSA WALLACE (CO-FOUNDER AND TRUSTEE),
CORINNA CUFF (MANAGEMENT TEAM)**

SISANDA TEAM ROLL OF HONOUR

Team Sisanda currently runs with the assistance of a handful of committed part-time employees: Leesa Bright, who has been on the journey with us since 2010; Nkulee Gwele, whose long journey with Sisanda began as a child attending our programmes before becoming an activity leader, Melanie Lippert, our programme manager who started with zoom storytime in covid, Vusumzi Gqwaka, a beneficiary of our activity leader programme in 2013, and Megan de Villiers, stepping in in 2024 to help communications. Nicky Seymour, co-founder and current director, steers the ship and manages the day-to-day running of the NPO.



SISANDA TEAM ROLL OF HONOUR



We are immeasurably grateful to everyone who has been part of our team in the past: Emma Gray (Newbury); Benita Kursan; Meghan Hedenskog; Anja Wilkinson Bienmueller; Athini Kenke; Jill Thewlis-Hunter; Catherine Biggs; Nikki Mathews; Paula Youens (ex-trustee) Leandra Mendes; Busiswa Ndlalankulu; Corinna Cuff; Mahbobah Jacobs; Lisa-Marie Swain; Shameem Bray; and Bonga Myekeni.

TRY THIS . . .

BRAIN TEASERS

Decipher tricky riddles, solve logic puzzles, think outside the box.

Memory - Problem-solving abilities



1. THE VALUE OF PLAY



There are so many benefits to playing in South African society. Play provides important physical and social foundations, helping children reach milestones. It fosters emotional health, strengthens relationships and builds resilient communities. The [South African Child Gauge](#) underscores the transformative power of play and the need to integrate it in the lives of both children and adults.

Play isn't just an activity; it's a vital tool in developing physical strength, social skills, and emotional resilience. Play is foundational in preventing early onset mental health issues and enhancing interpersonal connections across all ages. [Harvard University Centre on the Developing Child emphasises how play teaches life skills, fosters resilience to hardship and helps children to build responsive relationships.](#)

When children are deprived of the opportunity to play, it can significantly impair their development. Play is so important that the [United Nations has recognised it as a fundamental children's right](#). Play nurtures relationships with oneself and others, relieves stress and increases happiness. It fosters empathy, creativity and collaboration and supports courage and determination.

When children are free to direct play themselves, when play is not strictly structured or regulated by adults, there are unlimited benefits. This tradition has been passed down from generation to generation across the world. Sadly, children today are losing their natural ability for spontaneous play and the consequences are severe.

TRY THIS ... LOVING RELAXING DAILY

Your position:

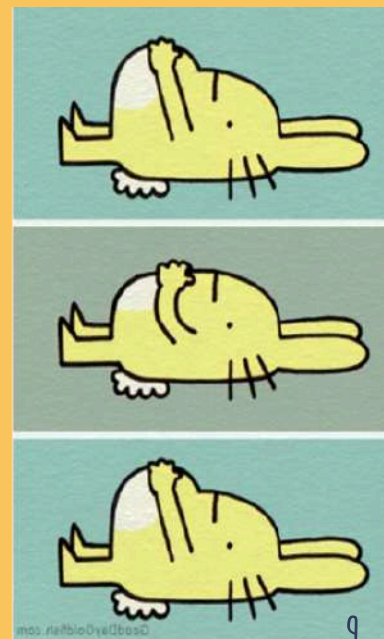
Lie on your back or sit on a chair.
Put one hand on your upper chest and the other on your stomach.

Practice this first:

Breathe in through your nose and into your stomach. The hand on your stomach should move upwards or out and the one on your chest should stay still.
Breathe out so the hand on your stomach moves down or in.

Now do this 10 times - slowly:

Breathe in slowly, count to four.
Hold your breath, count to four.
Breathe out until your stomach is flat.



Equally, while play with peers and solitary play are crucial, engaging with adults allows both children and adults to learn from and about each other. Children yearn for interaction with their caregivers, the individuals they trust most and regard with admiration.

South African children face enormous challenges, including child-headed households, poor schooling, and a dearth of safe places to play. The possibility of play is also increasingly threatened by digital distractions and overly structured learning. This is where Sisanda steps in. By fostering meaningful connections through play, Sisanda aims to cultivate resilience in children, equipping them with the skills to navigate life's adversities.



“HISTORY WILL
JUDGE US BY THE
DIFFERENCE WE
MAKE IN THE
EVERYDAY LIVES OF
CHILDREN.”
NELSON MANDELA

Our programmes are rooted in the belief that building strong relationships, particularly with at least one other individual, is fundamental to resilience. We understand resilience not merely as surviving, but as thriving in the face of challenges. In an era where increasing numbers of youth grapple with mental health, we view play as a preventative measure.

Play is a universal ‘super power’. It transcends cultural and generational barriers and brings people from different demographics together. Play fosters empathy and helps people with different abilities to understand each other. A great equaliser, play breaks down fear and stigma; it is a powerful weapon against discrimination, bullying and intolerance.

Our hope is to create a societal shift that places greater value on play, using an integrated approach with educators, parents, guardians and the community. We’d love to see more families, educators, caregivers and healthcare practitioners integrate play into their daily routines.



15TH BIRTHDAY

JOIN OUR PERSONAL CHALLENGE TO BUILD RESILIENCE THROUGH PLAY

<p>#CONNECTTHRUPLAY OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS WITH OUR 15 REASONS WHY PLAY IS ABOUT>>></p>	 C ONNECTION	 O PENNESS	 N OVELTY
 N URTURE	 E MPATHY	 C REATIVITY	 T OLERANCE
 T RIAL-&-ERROR	 H APPINESS	 R ESOLVE	 U NIQUENESS
 P ERSEVERANCE	 L OVE	 A GILITY	 Y OUNG-AT-HEART

LET'S CELEBRATE THIS 15TH YEAR OF THE SISANDA FUNDAYTION TEENAGER TOGETHER!

JOIN US IN A CHALLENGE TO BUILD YOUR OWN RESILIENCE OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS AS WE GEAR UP TO OUR BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION IN MAY.



Our 15th Birthday Social Campaign:
15 Reasons to #ConnectThruPlay to build resilience



2. THE EVOLUTION OF OUR MISSION

Sisanda FunDaytion began with a Christmas wish for the simplest of childhood joys: a day at the beach.

Co-founder Melissa Wallace recalls the genesis of our journey. While working at a Gugulethu clinic for children living with HIV, co-founder Daniella Mark was touched to hear that the children’s deepest wish for Christmas was to visit the beach. Although Gugulethu is less than 5km from Cape Town’s beautiful coastline, many of the children had never been to the seaside. Deeply moved, Melissa and Daniella decided to make their wish come true and set about organising a trip to fulfil this modest Christmas wish. They appealed to their networks for money and volunteers, and so the mission to bring joy to a small group of children came to life in March 2009.

The day at the beach proved to be both magical and transformative, for both the children and the volunteers. Energised by the experience, foundational members, including Melissa (current trustee), Daniella Meyersfeld (Mark), Nicky Seymour (current Director), Martha Evans (current trustee), and Lauren Liebrecht (Jacobs), began laying the groundwork for what would evolve into our legacy today.

An outing with a difference

IMAGINE living in Cape Town and never getting to enjoy the beach; for 57 children from an antiretroviral clinic in Gugulethu, this was the case – until their luck changed.

The children were treated to a day of fun in the sun at Clovelly Beach when the Sisanda FunDaytion was launched on Saturday 7 March.

The overjoyed children, watched over by around 20 volunteers armed with sun cream, hats and umbrellas, gathered for a grand day of sun, sand and rolling surf.

The Sisanda FunDaytion aims to offer disadvantaged and vulnerable children the opportunity to experience a full day of joy, fun and freedom. Founded by Melissa Wallace, Daniella Mark, Nicky Seymour, Lauren Jacobs and Martha Evans, the foundation is associated with the Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation

(which funded the launch day), and plans to identify groups of children in the Western Cape that will benefit from outings to Cape Town’s beautiful and sometimes inaccessible attractions.

“We’re hoping that these fun days will give the kids something to hold on to in tougher times,” says Mark.

Before ending the fun, the children were all given photos of themselves to take home.

Seymour feels the outing went well. “Seeing the children laughing and smiling just shows what a difference a day makes,” she says.

Future outings to Cape Town’s mountains and parks are in the pipeline.

If you’d like to volunteer for or donate to any of these excursions, or if you work for an organisation with children in need of fun days, please phone Daniella Mark at daniella.mark@hiv-research.org.za.

SEEING THE OCEAN: Khaya, Frank and Sibusiso enjoy an outing to Clovelly Beach with the Sisanda FunDaytion. Photo: Supplied

**OUR VERY
FIRST
FUN DAY
OUTING**

TRY THIS . . . CHOREOGRAPHY



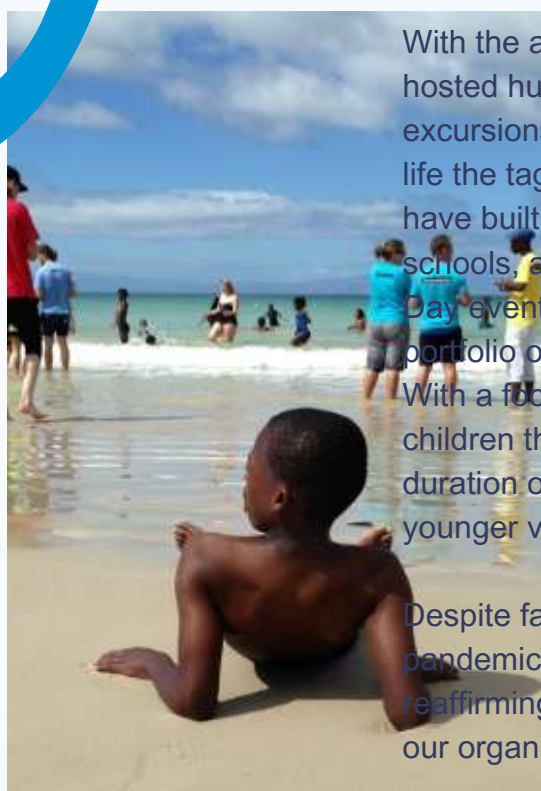
Pick music, experiment with moves & space, refine, rehearse. Show an audience.
Creativity - Imagination - Self-expression

Struck by the children's enchantment as well as the unforeseen and positive impact on volunteers, the organisers decided that the experience could and should be replicated. The team were particularly touched by a young girl named Sisanda (Xhosa for 'We are growing'). Despite facing psycho-social challenges and childhood trauma, the remarkable young girl exuded both joy and resilience. It was through these interactions that Sisanda FunDaytion was born.

And so they went about planning subsequent events, with each outing building on the last. The process organically gained momentum, as more individuals were inspired and joined in, providing funding and support for what became known as 'Fun Days'. Each day brought diverse groups together through play, fostering open-mindedness, overcoming fear of difference, and nurturing curiosity.



SISANDA FUNDAYTION WAS REGISTERED AS A NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION (NPO) IN JULY 2010 AND GAINED PUBLIC BENEFIT ORGANISATION (PBO) STATUS. OUR TAGLINE, 'WHAT A DIFFERENCE A DAY MAKES', EXPRESSED OUR BELIEF IN THE MAGIC OF PLAY.



With the active involvement of volunteers, Sisanda hosted hundreds of joyous events and outings, from excursions to the beach to trips to the circus, bringing to life the tagline '*What a Difference a Day makes*'. We have built strong relationships with children's homes, schools, and community organisations. From 10 Fun Day events in our inaugural year, we have built a portfolio of various types of Enriched Play Experiences. With a focus on connecting people with vulnerable children through recreation and play we expanded the duration of connection through Sisanda Circles and to younger volunteers through Sisanda Connect.

Despite facing the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, we adapted and grew, reaffirming our commitment to our cause and adapting our organisational tagline to: '**Connect through play**'.



**OUR
PROGRAMMES
FOCUS ON
CHILDREN
AND BUILDING
POSITIVE
ROLE
MODELS.**

In response to increasing mental health and societal challenges, Sisanda FunDaytion has identified a critical need to empower a stronger network of positive role models for children. Our efforts focus on engaging Play Ambassadors (ages 16 to 25), as well as parents, caregivers, care workers, and volunteers across Cape Town.

Driven by a desire to strengthen relationships, build resilience, and improve mental wellbeing, we launched several key initiatives: the Play Ambassador Programme empowering youth, the Play@Home Programme designed for caregivers and increased training through the Resilience Toolbox Partnership. Initially, our efforts spanned the greater Cape Town area. Since 2020, we have intensified our focus, specifically serving the communities of Gugulethu, Manenberg, and Tambo Village, to provide targeted support where it is most needed.

We work in partnership with child and youth care centres, community organisations, and schools, and also children’s hospitals and residential care homes, and have served children connected with over 80 wide ranging partners over our 15 years.



TRY THIS ...

RANDOM KINDNESS:

Challenge yourself/friends to see who can perform the most acts of kindness in a day. Compliment strangers, pay for someone’s coffee, paint a love rock.

Joy - Fulfilment





Our 15th birthday is a momentous occasion to reflect on the incredible journey we've shared in which we've touched the lives of over 14,757 people – connecting children, young people, volunteers, carers, parents, Sisanda staff and more. Each person has played a vital role in our journey.



2009

'WHAT A DIFFERENCE A DAY MAKES'

A Fun Day at the Beach in March with the Desmond Tutu Health Foundation led to a meeting of an inspired group of women. **Sisanda FunDaytion** was born.



2010

- Registered as a NPO and awarded PBO status.
- Employed our first staff member.
- Spur, Truworhs and HCI partnership established.
- World Cup Soccer with Margaret's House and Al Noor
- First Sisanda Carnival at Sarah Fox Children's Hospital.

2011

The team grows and we expand across Cape Town with various partners.

New website launched.

A Gauteng Fun Day at Gold Reef City.

2012

- TedX and Pecha Kucha presentations leading to other awareness raising for Active Citizenship including reaching higher institutes of learning.
- Sisanda Circles initiated at Khanyisa Community Church, Tambo Village, Manenberg.
- Featured on Cooked in Africa with Charly's Bakery and Moyo's restaurant for our 3rd birthday.
- We held 14 Fun Days in one year.



2013

ACTIVITY LEADERS START THEIR LEADERSHIP JOURNEY FACILITATING OUR PLAY EVENTS.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT DRIVE BENEFITING 213 CHILDREN AND OUR 3RD OF MANY ROTARY-FUNDED UNCLE PAUL'S CHRISTMAS PARTIES.

2014

Initiating Sisanda Connect, focusing on youth engagement between primary and secondary schools.

On Expresso Morning Show for 3rd time for Mandela Monday.

2017

100th Fun Day funded by Truworhs, supporting Baphumelele Children's Home.



2018

FOCUS ON CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AND ILLNESSES, WITH ONGOING CONNECT123 PROGRAMMES BUILDING ON INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CONNECTIONS AND 'SERVICE'.



2020

Our Tagline changed to “Connect through play”.

Introduction of Zoom Storytime during COVID-19.

Launch of Play@Home and Play Ambassador Programmes, led by past Activity Leaders.



2022

Presentation at Jelly Beanz UNICEF Child Mental Health conference.

Initiate Resilience Toolbox training, teaching parents and caregivers how to use play to build relationships and resilience of children affected by trauma and toxic stress.

2023

PLAY AMBASSADOR FEATURED ON CAPE TALK FOR YOUTH DAY

EXPANSION OF CAMPAIGNS INCLUDING #RIDE4RESILIENCE, #STEPS4SMILES, AND MAYOR VS. MASTERCHEF.

2024

CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF OPERATION IN MARCH



CURRENT PROGRAMMES:



PLAY AMBASSADOR PROGRAMME

ENRICHED PLAY EXPERIENCE

Community playdates



Circles

Fun Days

PLAY@HOME PROGRAMME



3. CONNECTION AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

Our work is built on 4 pillars:

- Play
- Connection
- Resilience
- Active Citizenship

Since our establishment, we've consistently fostered active citizenship through volunteerism. To this day, much of what we do is only possible because of the enthusiasm of unpaid volunteers.

Over the years, we have actively provided 3 543 volunteer opportunities by recruiting through educational institutions, corporates, our personal networks, communities in which we work and international partners. The power of these networks has not only been about the support that volunteers provide to our programmes, and the connections created between communities, it has also had far-reaching social impact and innovations.



'SISANDA FUN DAYS' IS WHERE IT ALL BEGAN



In keeping with our original concept from 2009, we host regular Fun Days. Our Fun Days give children from impoverished communities a chance to experience something exciting and new. Often held in parts of Cape Town that are inaccessible to them, our outings give them something to look forward to. They boost energy levels and strengthen connections with each other and the world around them, especially the natural world. The children and volunteers learn so much about themselves, socialising with people they don't know while creating special memories and bonds.

TRY THIS ... ART PROJECT:

Use a large canvas/paper, collaborate on an art project. Use painting, drawing, collage.

Celebrating diversity -
Teamwork

We've taken children to places of beauty all over Cape Town and beyond – including Table Mountain, Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, the West Coast National Park, Greenpoint Park, Newlands Forest and, of course, the beach! We've arranged visits to dozens of theme parks, including the World of Birds, Cape Town Science Centre, Two Oceans Aquarium, Cape Town Ostrich Park, Ratanga Junction and Intaka Island. With supported access to these venues, we've facilitated enriching cultural experiences, including trips to Zip Zap Circus, shows held by the College of Magic and football games. If it's fun, we've done it!

Our Fun Day journey began with volunteers lifting children to locations in their own cars. In 2010, the HCI Foundation joined our mission, providing us with bus transportation to venues, which meant we could hold more frequent and diverse Fun Days. For many years, Spur Steak Ranches provided much-appreciated restaurant meals for our Fun Day groups. Truworths also stepped in, not only funding our organisation and volunteering at events but also giving us an endless supply of special Sisanda T-shirts for our outings. These brightly coloured shirts mean we can easily identify 'our' children in public spaces. Sisanda children form a unique bond over these experiences, creating a special community, synonymous with fun, light, and joy. The T-shirts, which children get to keep, are worn everywhere, and enable recognition over their shared experiences within their communities.

Other regular partners such as OMEGA Air, Wings of Support, Debonairs and Converge Consulting ensure that these days are bright, nourishing and magical.

Fun Days have been excellent opportunities for businesses to arrange team-building experiences for their staff; adding value to the children and the volunteers.



There have also been various spin-offs from our Fun Days. These have included Christmas present drives, a food scheme for a children's home in Nyanga and several donations of equipment, building material and furniture to childrens homes. Over the years, we have facilitated numerous life-changing connections. One particularly transformative story is the introduction of volunteer Niki Covary to Ncedolwethu Educare. Niki helped the organisation register with the Department of Social Services, create a website, and secure funding. She continues to champion Ncedolwethu to this day. Another powerful connection was made between a resilient young boy on one of our Fun Days and volunteer who eventually adopted the child, profoundly changing the lives of both.

12-YEAR-OLD BOY'S REFLECTION ON A FUN DAY OUTING:

"I will tell my parents that today I walked in a garden. I have never walked in a garden before. I learnt that I loved creatures (insects) more than I thought I did."



INTERNATIONAL FUN DAY VOLUNTEER

"I went to Cape Town seeking a 'unique' experience', but what I didn't foresee was the impact that it would have on me; the way it surprisingly moved me and even changed me."

~ Emily Wong (Melbourne, Australia)

Later after raising funds through their wedding, Emily and her new husband Max warmly stated, "We'll just cut our honeymoon short. Please give the kids a hug from us."



Fun Days are embedded in the Enriched Play Experiences in our 2024 and beyond programme.



SISANDA CIRCLES CREATE MORE SUSTAINED ENGAGEMENT WITH CHILDREN

We loved our Fun Days (and still do). But we wanted to do more. We wanted more sustained engagement with children. And so our second programme was born in 2012: Sisanda Circles. Circles involves small-scale community-based extra-curricular activities (classes, workshops, experiences, discussions) facilitated by Sisanda FunDaytion volunteers over a period of weeks. The volunteer or 'Circle leader' engages the youngsters in a sustained recreational programme, often enabling them to develop a new skill.



Anja Wilkinson Bienmueller pioneered Circles until 2017 and continued as a committed volunteer thereafter. Notable Circles were run by Susanne and Geoff von Klemperer, who delivered an 'Are you Ready?' Leadership Circle for young people from St. Georges Home for Girls, Leliebloom Children's Home, the Amy Biehl Foundation and others. Robyn Borowski from COREFIT taught Pilates to teenagers from the Salesian Institute and Ikhaya le Themba. And Jason Delplanque wowed kids from Lawrence House with his Improv Circles, which they absolutely loved.



Zakiya Atkinson, a professional dancer and teacher from the United States, led one of our first Circles back in 2012 at Khanyisa Community Church in Tambo village, still a very close partner of ours. She took 19 teenagers through a programme of dance and music tuition during her winter holiday, teaching the participants about the benefits of teamwork and fostering self-confidence. The Circle culminated in a memorable performance.

TRY THIS ... COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS:

Get involved in community service or acts of kindness. Organise a food drive, visit elderly neighbours, or volunteer at a local charity like Sisanda FunDaytion.

"Working with these young people was the highlight of my stay and the learning was reciprocal. I learned a great deal from Sisanda FunDaytion on how to expand my mission back home."

~ Zakiya Atkinson, Circle Leader Volunteer





FOR THE LOVE OF STORIES

We love the excitement that stories, songs and rhymes bring, fueling children’s young imaginations. Storytelling has always played an important part of our work. Our Storytime initiative blossomed during the Covid-19 pandemic. Recognising the immense strain everyone was under, we developed a special online ‘storytime’ hour. This not only helped us maintain our connection with children but also provided a much-needed break for caregivers. We are excited to now offer this beloved programme in person once again.



FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD MACAELA WAS A REGULAR PARTICIPANT IN OUR COVID-19 ZOOM STORYTIME SESSIONS. SHE EVENTUALLY STARTED READING AND TELLING STORIES HERSELF.

“The storytelling programme made me realise that reading bedtime stories to your younger family members is important. It made me be more kind and loving towards kids younger than me. This actually inspires me to a lot to succeed at my dream of becoming a famous storyteller/teller.”

Circle leader Kayla Diamond inspired the love of reading in young children from Bonteheuwel by sharing her own published book, *Glow*, and she continued the connection during Zoom Storytime all the way from Dubai during the Covid-19 pandemic.



A total of 116 volunteers have facilitated 108 Circles, and activities have ranged from beautifying an Early Childhood Development (ECD) centre to leading drumming, public speaking, reading and hiking circles and of course our favorite ‘Storytime’.



Circles are embedded in the Enriched Play Experiences in our 2024 and beyond programme.

TRY THIS . . .

VISIT A SCIENCE CENTRE OR AQUARIUM:

Immerse in interactive exhibits and hands-on activities that ignite curiosity & stimulate memory.

Adaptability - Learning

Ross Metcalfe, one of our most enthusiastic volunteers, has shown a commitment to storytelling that stands as testament to the profound impact of creativity and play on well-being. Ross tells captivating tales and has provided invaluable hours of joy and inspiration for children and staff at St. Joseph's Home for children with chronic and debilitating illnesses and Red Cross Children's Hospital. At 79, he's taken on a degree in Psychology researching the impact of play and storytelling on the health of children, which should contain valuable insights from his time with Sisanda and vice versa.



SISANDA CONNECT ENCOURAGES MULTI-AGE PLAY



Young children naturally look up to and emulate their immediate peers, and so, in 2013, we initiated our Connect programme, partnering with schools from different backgrounds. Connect events are typically held on school premises and involve a morning- or day-long programme of specially planned games, sporting activities and/or art and crafts.

Named 'Connect' because of its focus on connecting older youth volunteers from typically well-resourced schools with younger children from less-resourced backgrounds, the programme gives learners an opportunity to contribute and, in so doing, ignites active citizenship. Since 2020, this programme merged with Fun Days.

TRY THIS . . . ANIMAL INTERACTION

Spend time with animals: pet care, farm visits or volunteer at an animal shelter. Observe. Feel. Think about their lives.

Empathy - Responsibility - Emotional resilience

Over seven years, we have facilitated 41 Connect events with 996 energetic and passionate teens from Wynberg Girls' and Boys' High Schools, Kidds House Bishops, Herschel, Herzlia, Junior City Council, Sozo Foundation, International School of Cape Town and a group of young girls through the Sistahood.



A secondary pupil participating in the programme had this to say:

“I was always aware of the hardships that many South Africans face but SF provided a different perspective to that by allowing us to engage with young children who live difficult lives. It really opens your eyes when you can sit face to face with someone and hear their story. It has made me become a more socially aware individual and my involvement with SF actually sparked my interest in my career choice (primary school teaching). Working with SF has shown me how important it is for me to use my privilege to help others and how important it is to allow children the simple pleasure of playing and fun.”



“I really love how Sisanda allows both the volunteers and children to learn new skills and have fun! I also love children so I’m always keen to help out on a Connect day!”



“Being involved in Sisanda has definitely boosted my confidence with public speaking and it has made me more socially aware of what is happening in South Africa and how important it is to try and make a difference.”

“The priority for children is to learn social engagement, basic humanity, how to communicate. Outings show them that they can hold themselves in a different context – this grows their confidence.”

~ Head teacher from one of our primary schools in the programme.

“Outings which are something special give children something to look forward to. They get to connect with someone new like a mentor (big brother/big sister) and they learn how to interact.”



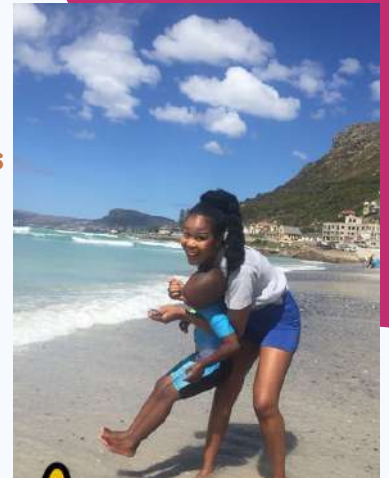
Connect Programmes was integrated into our Fun Day Programme after 2020.

VOLUNTEERS AND SUPPORTERS ROLL OF HONOUR

The success of Sisanda FunDaytion's initiatives hinges on the crucial support of others. Whether contributions of time, resources, or expertise, this enables us to provide impactful programmes. We have over 3500 individuals we are grateful to, these are some of those stars:



Natalie Kroenig
Meka Lentin
Nikki Matthews
Constance Williams
Glenn Matthews
Jean Minnaar
Natasha Winterton
Dirk Meerkotter
Giselle Kroeger
Ross Metcalf
Tracey Miles



Hilton Allison
Dominic Bright
Vuyo Buthelezi
Suzi Caras
Christine Cornick
Noelene Curry
Emma Curry
Paula Faria
Rob Forth
Michael Forth
Cesca Garton
Zea Grimston
Moeheen Baardman
Rosalie Herick
Quinton Hoffman
Beverley Houston
Dylan Hyneck
Stefan Jacobs
Felicity Jones
Naazly Kellerman
Kathleen Kitskhe
Pam Knipe
Lester-Mark Engelbrecht
Ros Koch
Sara Greenbaum-Reynolds

Tshofofelo Mpuru
Malandi Ntlokwa
Carryn Ortlepp
Micaela Peters
Simone Peters
Robert Plummer
Sarah Roussouw
Judy Seymour
Nicole Tarr
Wayne Thomas
Chase Trusler
Ronel van Dijk
Richard Wallace
Vicki Wallace
Mikey Wiper
Paula Youens



4. FROM LEADING ACTIVITIES TO CHAMPIONING PLAY



Sisanda began as an initiative involving a small network of friends, but we are now fully rooted in the communities we serve. Over time, increased visibility through media features and strategic partnerships have solidified our presence, and the demographic of our volunteer and staff body has shifted. Our expanded activities are now implemented by our fabulous local **Play Ambassadors** – amazing individuals who run programmes in their communities, supported by our team with training, mentorship and a peer support structure.

The evolution from volunteer to Activity Leader to Play Ambassador has led to employment with us for three young people, taking on roles that empower more youth.

PLAY AMBASSADORS ARE OUR POSITIVE ROLE MODELS



TRY THIS ... LEARNING MOMENTS:

Take everyday activities and build in play and learning. Take a new route, listen to music, skip to where you're going.
Growth - Adaptability - Joy

In 2012, during an inaugural Circle event we discovered a rising star, Nonkuleleko 'Nkulee' Gwele, who showcased her talent for singing. After we facilitated her entrance into the music world through music lessons and vocal coaching offered by the 'Born to be Famous' Academy, she became a core member of our team, serving as an Activity Leader.



From 2013, we initiated training sessions to inspire youth, like Nkulee, as positive role models in the communities we serve, leading to the establishment of our Activity Leaders – a core group of young adults, passionate about our mission, who provide regular hands-on help during our programmes.



In 2020, we made a deliberate decision to expand our reach by engaging more young people. With the onset of COVID-19 lockdowns, the landscape drastically shifted, compelling us to pivot. The inability to hold in-person gatherings posed significant challenges, and our traditional programmes came to a standstill. It was an abrupt break in the momentum we had built up between 2009 and 2019, but it led to some surprising new developments.



Amidst this upheaval, we identified a crucial gap in family relationships, particularly in households where bonds were strained or broken. Bonga Myekeni, a long-standing Activity Leader, saw an opportunity for young people from the community to get more involved. Drawing from our wealth of experience, we realised we could empower local youth to help us extend our support beyond children to encompass their families. This insight led to the development of the more formalised Play Ambassador programme, taken up by our former Activity Leaders. Initially conceived to bolster our existing initiatives, it gradually evolved into an important standalone programme. Our organisation goal became twofold: to reach a broader spectrum of children and to increase more positive 'Play' role models by empowering both youth and adults alike.

Our Play Ambassador programme trains young people to give guardians and caregivers the tools to integrate play into their daily lives while also inspiring children by directly engaging with them through our Play programmes. These young people aged 15 to 25 years also focus on their own personal development and gain leadership skills through these facilitations.





Anelisa 'Mariza' Kakaza, who joined as a volunteer, is instrumental in the success of our Play programmes today. She has been a Play Ambassador with us since 2020 and plans to train as a teacher. When she joined Sisanda, she was afraid to speak publicly and was challenged with a stutter. Today, she says that she has almost managed to completely overcome this because of the work she does in her community with Sisanda. Her plan is to commence tertiary studies in 2025 and she's moving forward with a lot more confidence in her abilities.

PLAY AMBASSADOR ROLL OF HONOUR



The inception of the Play Ambassador programme marked an unexpected evolution for our organisation. To date, we have connected with 54 wonderful young people from marginalised communities through this programme, two of whom are employed with us today.

These are some of these go-getters who achieved Level 2 and 3 of our programme

Siphokazi Zono
Vuyo Ntlokolo
Lwanda Mpondo
Thuso Makotoana
Masixole Mkatshane
Mariza Kakaza
Mandla Mhaga
Zintle Mene
Zizipho Tena
Mpuleng Molele
Sisipho Joseph
Siphamandla Matolengwe
Thandiwe Putuma
Aliyah Linko
Annie-Angel Mokoena
Thabo Jilaji
Thimna Ntshangana



TRY THIS ...

GUESSING GAME:

Name a person on paper, stick to a player's forehead; they guess their identity asking yes/no questions.

Interaction - Critical thinking - Reasoning

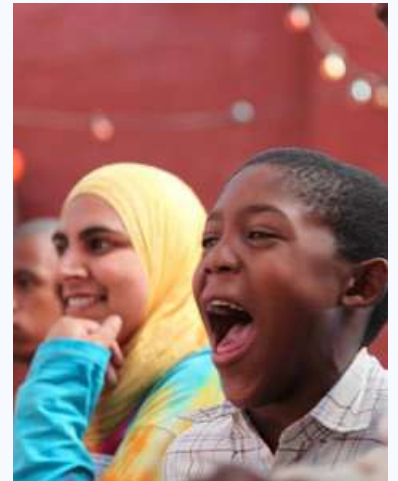


5. IMPACTING COMMUNITIES



While our work has reached thousands of beneficiaries, these individuals aren't simply recipients of our 'aid'. They are remarkable young people navigating immense challenges with unwavering strength, who in turn have inspired us with their determined pursuit of joy in the face of adversity and their courage with connecting with new people and stepping into new spaces. Some of them have become committed volunteers and/or staff members.

However, their families, guardians and caregivers are also often facing their own immense financial and emotional challenges and are eager to forge better relationships and explore ways to create healthy family dynamics.



PLAY@HOME IS IMPROVING FAMILY DYNAMICS



Many adults don't know how to support play, and through our programmes and specifically through our Play Ambassadors, we are trying to change this. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the risks of this to children's development and allowed us the opportunity to work with the Play Ambassadors to understand how we could impact social change and family and community cohesion.

Our **Play@Home** programme has significantly influenced community relationships and is shifting cultural attitudes towards play within South African communities. There's a vital need for early intergenerational intervention in the mental health crisis and Play is a powerful tool to shift this. 335 families from Gugulethu and Tambo village have successfully completed the 8-week programme.

We value our partnership with Sisanda FunDaytion and recognise the impact they are making to the lives of children and young people in our communities. The parents of our participants have expressed joy, gratitude and excitement for the services carried out which allows them to be better parents and so assisting in the positive development of their children. The ethos and method that Sisanda Fundaytion is built on, corresponds with ours and we are very appreciative of the partnership with have with them.

Yours in child development,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frida', is written over a horizontal line.

Frida Vesterberg, co-founder and director





Bonga, our former Play@Home Co-ordinator from Gugulethu, documented the profound impact our programme had on one family, showcasing how active community engagement can challenge and transform entrenched cultural attitudes.

“Our family relationships have improved. Before the programme no one really cared about who is doing what and yet even if someone needs help, they will just keep quiet, eat and sleep. I am not saying this because we hated each other no, it’s a matter of lacking communication.”



“Now the attitude toward each other has changed. We are able to communicate clearly and more maturely, helping around the house again and being there for the kids. My daughter is not shy anymore outside, she now has self-confidence. I have noticed so much change also from the kids in the community who have done the Sisanda programmes. They have created friendship amongst each other. It’s something we want to see as parents’, kids having fun and playing together with no fights.”

Beyond inspiring play and providing ideas to manage stress levels the Play Ambassadors motivate families to spend time together. Play is an easy and fun tool to support this. 15 mins of Play together a day has a profound impact on mental health, development of children and relationships. We have seen significant shifts in the communities we’ve worked in from time together as a family being rare to regular time together becoming the norm.




	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1							
Week 2							
Week 3							
Week 4							
Week 5							
Week 6							
Week 7							
Week 8							

“I learnt how to be a better parent to my grandchild just by being able to communicate with each other and being an open minded parent.”

“My children don’t get body shamed and teased by strangers anymore, they have overcome many bullies at school and in the community.”

PLAY IS FOR EVERYONE

Employees in under-resourced children's homes, hospitals, and other places of safety perform demanding, time-consuming work that often takes an emotional toll. The support we provide can be as beneficial to them as it is to the children, offering a much-needed break and morale boost—affirming their daily efforts. Incorporating play into their often spiritually taxing work has uplifted many along the way.



Working with organisations caring for disabled and hospitalised children has been an important pillar for us, ensuring that all children have the chance to be children and to enable volunteers a wide scope for building compassion and empathy. Our journey with Sarah Fox Convalescent Hospital started in 2010 with Sisanda Carnivals reaching in-patients and hospital staff, followed by St. Joseph's Home for children with chronic and debilitating illnesses and Project Playground 'Play On Wheels' group. To date, we have held seven carnivals, with our most recent magical day in March 2024, involving all the children and staff of St. Joseph's Home. We add regular Storytime Circles, staff training and craft groups to how we support these places that provide care to the most vulnerable children in our society.

'This day was a momentous occasion for the children that will be etched in their memories for years to come. Your support also had a profound impact on the St Joseph's Hospital staff, who have faced immense challenges this year. The opportunity to laugh and play with the children uplifted their spirits and was a reminder of the importance of joy and connection in their work.'



New partnership with SHAWCO health initiatives (University of Cape Town Primary Health Care Services) indicates further potential impact of play interventions on health.

“Such a vibrant clinic really helped improve the general atmosphere from a normal (and sometimes quite boring) health check-up. Sisanda’s Play workshop significantly improved the student’s ability to practice the art of medicine, and the patient’s ability to be receptive to the help.”



RESILIENCE TOOLBOX IS A TRAINING PLATFORM EMPOWERING PLAYFUL AND RESILIENT ROLE MODELS

An exciting new step for us has been sharing our knowledge more formally—through training workshops—as activities integrated into our Play events, and through educational resources. Through *Resilience Toolbox*, a collaboration with [Resilience Hub](#), we have facilitated training for parents, youth and the staff of our partners, including Christine Revel Children’s Home, St. Joseph’s Hospital, Desmond Tutu Health Foundation and VUSA Rugby and Learning academy. In 2023, this new aspect to our work indirectly influenced the lives of 613 children.



TRY THIS . . .

PUZZLE SOLVING

Do a jigsaw puzzle or STEM activity, challenge yourself with critical thinking tasks.

Perseverance - Endurance - Critical thinking

“We have become more mindful of our engagements and communications with children. We really do now understand the value of play, not only for our children but also for ourselves. This is an invaluable resource that should be experienced by professionals and caregivers alike.”



6. ADVANCING OUR MISSION AND ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY



Throughout our 15-year journey, we've shared our story to raise awareness about the value of play on various platforms, from our first Fun Day shared in local community newspaper People's Post to TEDx Talks and Pecha Kucha presentations (2012), as well as the Wonderful Women Expo (2013). Appearances on the Espresso Morning Show (2013 and 2014) as well as on Bush Radio (2012 and 2017) provided us with valuable opportunities to amplify our impact. Our efforts have also been recognised by media outlets such as Kulula's InFlight magazine Khuluma and Cosmopolitan (2014) and Kfm and Cape Talk Radio (2023).

Recently, we had the opportunity to present our insights at a Community Mental Health convention (2022 and 2023), the Jelly Bean UNICEF Child Mental Health Conference supported by our Play Ambassadors (2022), and at the various partner events celebrating Youth, Child Protection and Parents (2023).



We were featured in the 2023 the Mayor vs. MasterChef cooking competition for charity. The cook-off not only enabled us to raise funds but also elevated children's mental health on the local government agenda. Hosted by former MasterChef winner and CEO of LED Lighting SA Shawn Paul Godfrey, the competition brought together positive role models like Cape Town Mayor Geordin Hill-Lewis to support public benefit organisations like Sisanda. Reflecting on his motivation to give back, Godfrey shared, *"This past year, a nagging desire has arisen to do better with sharing, giving back, and challenging myself and those around me to have a positive influence."*



"Let me tell you about the best day of my life: it was a Sisanda Fun Day."
Young boy after a Fun Day.

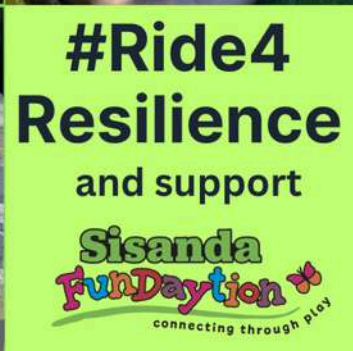


We've hosted a variety of events that have taken shape as sport fundraisers and quizzes. With the help of passionate individuals and corporate supporters, we've successfully hosted #Ride4Resilience, 6 times doing the Cape Town Cycle Tour and #Steps4Smiles (Two Oceans and Comrades Marathons) campaigns that have kept us going financially through the most challenging times, reminding us to "never underestimate the big importance of small things" (Matt Haig). Very active in these campaigns are members of our team Nicky Seymour and Leesa Bright together with Omega Air and the entire Trusler family, including Chase Trusler, our sport ambassador, and family friend Wayne Thomas, who this year came all the way out from the USA to cycle the Cape Town Cycle Tour to raise money for us.



Also long-standing Sisanda supporters in both time and money have been Converge Consulting and their staff, the Bright family, Nikki and Glenn Matthews and especially Rob Forth.

Rob kickstarted our Argus Cycle Tour campaign in 2014, flying from the UK for many tours and keeping us in his heart until his sad passing in 2019. The 2023 Cycle Tour was completed in his memory.



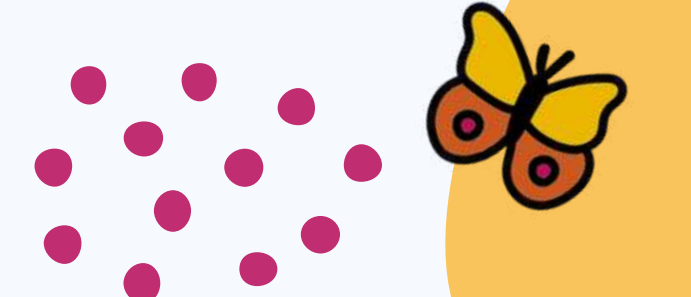


TRY THIS . . .

MYSTERY BOX

Fill box with objects/clues.
Solve/complete using only items inside;
(build a bridge/rescue a toy in "danger".)

Creativity - Collaboration



PARTNER ORGANISATIONS ROLL OF HONOUR



"We all have a responsibility to give back, get involved, and be changemakers in our city and communities. I wish to share this with our team and make volunteering part of our company culture." – Dominic Bright, CEO Converge Consulting

We are deeply grateful for the commitment and generosity of our invaluable partner organisations, past and present, whose contributions have helped us make a difference in the lives of children and families in need.

The CP Charitable Trust

Zestcore

Omega Air

Converge Consulting

Truworths

Wings of Support

Nucleus Supply Chain

LED Lighting SA

Naussbaum Foundation

Devs-Sivest (Pty) Ltd

Nolands Incorporated

Debonairs

Butler's Pizza

Catrobatkidz

Dimension Data

Eniwe Children's Fund

Melbro Consulting

Media 24

O'Brien Recruitment

Old Mutual

Otto Foundation

Pan African Shopfitters

Perigon Property Solutions

Sozo Foundation

Spark ATM

Spatial Dimension

Spur Steak Ranches

Various Rotary Clubs

(notably Wynberg)

VC Cares (Varsity College)

Woolworths

Thank-you to Giselle Kroeger, Megan de Viliers, Martha Evans, Nicky Seymour and InsideData for producing this Time Capsule

We battle ongoing financial challenges, no doubt exacerbated by the pandemic, but we remain committed. Despite facing a landscape where financial support is more strained, we persist in our mission by reaching out and engaging with those who align with our aspirations.

With mounting evidence on the impact of stress on children's development and social-emotional skills, health and school readiness, and their ability to learn, we are more determined than ever to keep providing the support we know is needed and that we are best placed to provide.

HELP US GROW THIS IMPACT

15 YEARS FROM MARCH 2009 TO FEB 2024



287 EVENTS AND
PROJECTS ACTIVATED



3 624 ENRICHED PLAY
EXPERIENCES CREATED

9 767 CHILDREN
PLAY OPPORTUNITIES
CREATED



3 543 VOLUNTEER
PLAY OPPORTUNITIES
CREATED



175 YOUTH, PARENTS
AND CAREGIVERS
TRAINED

54 YOUTH EMPOWERED
AS PLAY AMBASSADORS



335
"PLAY@HOME"
FAMILIES REACHED

For more information about us, our programmes and how you can support or become involved in our work – go to www.sisanda.org.za. Follow us on Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn and help make the next 15 years even more impactful!



Bank: Standard Bank
Branch: Constantia
Account name: Sisanda FunDaytion
Branch code: 025309
Account number: 063033976
Swift code: SBZA ZAJJ

