Annual Report
(Period April 1st, 2017 – March 31st, 2018)

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3. Log into the App and search for "Autism South Africa".
4. Choose your applicable access group(s).
5. If you don’t have a smartphone go to autismsouthafrica.teamapp.com to sign up and view this App online.

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Contact: Lerato
Email: admin@autismsouthafrica.org
Chairperson’s Report 2018

It is my privilege to present a fourth annual report as chairperson of the national executive committee of Autism South Africa. Due to increasing professional and personal commitments, this will be my final report, at least for now. A:SA is in sound financial and organisational shape and capable executive hands and the NEC itself will benefit from fresh leadership.

It is to Sandy’s credit that, in the past year, A:SA has strengthened its relationships with other organisations within the disability sector, finding a common purpose and voice on issues of mutual interest and concern.

Early in the year, for example, A:SA joined forces with other disability organisations to take issue with a theme park’s policy that precluded all persons with physical or mental disabilities from enjoying any “rides” at the park. A:SA took the view that the policy entailed unfair discrimination on the basis of disability in breach of section 9(4) and (5) of the Constitution read with sections 6 and 9 of the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000. A policy that differentiated between and disadvantaged a class of persons merely by virtue of a disability, without any consideration of or regard to the facts and circumstances of each case, was indefensible in our constitutional dispensation.
Perhaps alerted to the challenge that the disability sector was poised to mount, the park abandoned its discriminatory policy.

During the course of the year A;SA became increasingly aware of the plight of hundreds of thousands of learners with disabilities, including autism, who await placement at appropriate schools. Many of these learners are either in educational environments that are incapable of meeting their needs or outside the education system. Having tried without significant success to work together with the Department of Education to address this predicament, the NEC resolved to engage the pro bono legal services of the Centre for Child Law and to work with the wider disability community to initiate legal proceedings aimed at vindicating the constitutional rights of learners. The issue is so vital that it simply must be pursued.

My sense is that, in years to come, the autism community will benefit from A;SA's assuming increasing relevance and prominence as a fighter for disability rights generally.

As it broadens its focus, A;SA must of course also deepen its relationships within the autism community itself. The challenge is not insignificant. Whilst there are obvious aspects of commonality, each person or family experiences autism uniquely. All of these voices – verbal and non-verbal – should be heard and valued by the organisation.
To this end, under the guidance of Desirae, Melt and Shani, the NEC’s adult matters subcommittee has taken strides in 2018 towards enhancing A;SA’s relevance to and interaction with teens and adults who have autism, creating opportunities to listen to and learn from this vital constituency within the autism community.

2018 has again seen A;SA positioned at the forefront of academic and professional thought on autism in South Africa. A;SA facilitated a symposium at the North West University and was closely involved in organising the stakeholder engagement at IMFAR, in Stellenbosch.

A;SA continues to provide training to caregivers and educators, spreading awareness and information across our provinces and deriving income to sustain the organisation. Exciting projects to which it has committed include bringing the World Health Organisation’s Caregiver Skills Training programme to South Africa in partnership with the Department of Social Development and the University of Cape Town and implementing the EarlyBird training programme in South Africa in partnership with UCT’s Centre for Autism Research in Africa. The intention is to offer these programmes throughout the country, notably in unresource, unserviced rural areas.

These efforts contribute towards realising A;SA’s strategic goals for the three-year period 2017 to 2019, being:
1. to ensure the sustainability of all aspects of A;SA, including its:

1.1. financial integrity and security; and

1.2. organisational stability, including by means of effective succession planning;

2. to be the leader in and preferred partner for whole-lifespan autism awareness, education and advocacy (including self-advocacy and empowerment) in South Africa, including by:

2.1. pursuing the progressive realisation of A;SA’s vision and mission; and

2.2. monitoring, evaluating and enhancing its existing training and other services;

3. to grow as an organisation throughout South Africa, by:

3.1. establishing and developing an A;SA presence in Limpopo and the Western Cape; and

3.2. strengthening its existing presences in other provinces; and

4. to be a model for other African organisations that share A;SA’s vision and mission.

These are worthy goals and I offer A;SA and the next NEC my ongoing support in their pursuit.
As 2018 draws to a close, it is pleasing to observe that A;SA finds itself in a stable and self-sufficient financial position, as reflected in the audited financial statements presented in this annual report.

I am indebted to Desirae and our fellow NEC members for their commitments of personal and professional time to the affairs of A;SA.

We extend our thanks to Sandy and her team, including all A;SA regional development officers, for the considerable energy and enthusiasm with which they continue to tackle the numerous activities and opportunities of A;SA, many of which are detailed and depicted in this annual report.

It has been my pleasure to lead an NEC representative of our country's demographics and our community’s journeys with autism. Indeed, A;SA is a community of communities. The diversity of its members and all others whom A;SA aspires to be relevant to and serve is what brings vibrancy to the deliberations and endeavours of the organisation. What we do depends on who we are and I am delighted that, in every respect, the candidates for election to the next NEC reflect a rich tapestry of personal and professional connections to autism throughout South Africa.

I wish the entire A;SA team well as it enters 2019.

ROBIN PEARSE SC

26 October 2018
National Executive Committee 2016 – 2018

Chairperson: Robin Pearse
Practising advocate and father of son with ASD

Vice-Chairperson: Desirae Pillay
Tech Advisor for Inclusive Solutions and mother to Autistic Adult daughter

Secretary: Melt Olckers
Autistic Self-Advocate

Tumi Leeuw
Paediatrician with Special interest in Autism

Treasurer: Hector Kingwill
Bookkeeper – friend of Autism South Africa

Petrus De Vries
Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the University of Cape Town

David Griessel
Principal Specialist – Dept. of Paediatrics and Child Health at the University of the Free State.

Neliswa Khumalo
Academic Support Specialist

Shani Zuk
Program Director: Ernie Els for Autism Centre

Mmatlala Mabeba
Child Psychiatrist
2017 passed us in a whirlwind! I am extremely grateful and honoured to have a team that surrounds me that shares my commitment to this organisation. I always say to them ‘Team Work makes the Dream Work’ and I truly believe that. Without their dedication and passion in our South African communities we would not be the impactful organisation we are today. From our National Executive Committee, Head Office Staff to our Regional Development Officers, I am blessed to be a part of Team A;SA. I acknowledge and appreciate each one of you.

It is always extremely difficult to choose my highlights of the year to speak to in this report as there are always so many! Kimberley Friendship Circle (Thank you Gruispad Theatre and Marlene), STARS sibling support group (JSA & Ernie Els team shout out!) and our Parent Empowerment Group (Thank you to City of Joburg!), Zoo Trot (Jozi4Autism you rock!) are just a few that I know need more airtime in this report, but my pages are few! Please know that I see you and appreciate your support and collaboration with A;SA.

The 2017 Autism Symposium (Affecting Change) was our second year collaborating with the North-West University, Institute of Psychology and Wellbeing and was again a resounding success, even attracting media attention this year! This is an incredibly dedicated team of professionals and it was a pleasure to work with them again.

Prof. Petrus De Vries provided an incredible opportunity at IMFAR in Stellenbosch which enabled us to bring together autism stakeholders from across the country supported by Autism Speaks and IMFAR. The purpose of this engagement was to thrash out goals and activities across the country, with collaboration and respect for one another held first and foremost. We are after all, all working towards the same goal of acceptance and appreciation for individuals with ASD in South Africa. The main goals identified were focused on: i) collaboration and networking ii) monitoring and evaluation iii) awareness and advocacy iv) self-representation v) education, learning opportunities and life-long planning vi) intervention and training. The full feedback can be accessed here. (ADD HYPERLINK).

2017 ended in a flurry of activity when the Department of Social Development contacted us to say that our business plan for the implementation of the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) Caregiver Skills Training (CST) in South Africa. This is a systemic change project aimed at equipping non-professionals to provide broad-based early intervention to
children with all developmental delays. The WHO requirement is that government funds the piloting of CST to ensure buy-in and true systemic change. We are most fortunate and unique in that the South Africa project is a collaboration between NGO (A;SA), Government (DSD) and Academia (University of Cape Town).

Dr Liezl Schlebusch is heading up the project and you can read more about it here: http://www.cara.uct.ac.za/pilot-testing-implementation-world-health-organisation%E2%80%99s-caregiver-skills-training-cst-programme. We are truly excited by this project and attended the first CST technical team meeting in Xiamen, China in early December.

This year Autism South Africa has remained on the path of sustainability, with generating over 30% of our income from our workshops and training. When one adds these figures to A;SA’s other fundraising activities, such as Casual Day, our Annual Golf Day and Zoo Trot, this increases to 41% of our income that is generated by ourselves. In this economic climate we realise how vital income generation activities are and hope that we can continue on this very exciting and positive path. We realise that the climate affects not only NPOs in South Africa, but the corporate appetite for funding and government’s ability to commit funds for projects and activities. It is therefore hoped that we can continue to make an increased impact moving into the next financial year.
Our income increased substantially this year due to the unexpected National Lottery Commission funding and the Department of Social Development’s support for the Caregiver Skills Training project. We are truly grateful to the NLC as we are able to allocate much of our operational costs to them which provides A;SA with the capacity to continue our dedication to our projects.

![Income Statement Comparison Graph]

Thank you to all I have interacted with over the past year, you truly humble me.

We are because you are!

All the Best,

Sandy

[Signature]
# Head Office Staff

<table>
<thead>
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## Regional Development and Support Officers

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| Eastern Cape                  | Antoinette Bruce-Alexander     | Tel: 071 360 3992  
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| North West                    | Dineo Mosiane                  | Tel: 079 392 2786  
  [email: support@autismsouthafrica.org] |
| KwaZulu-Natal                 | Rosemary Shezi                 | Tel: 071 360 4034  
  [email: kwazulu-natal@autismsouthafrica.org] |
| Northern Cape                 | Elfreda Baartman               | Tel: 071 473 4293  
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| Limpopo and Mpumalanga        | Mary Moeketsi                  | Tel: 071 360 6535  
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| Free State                    | Selinah Jele                   | Tel: 078 152 2608  
  [email: rdofs@autismsouthafrica.org] |
| Gauteng                       | Gloria Gkikas (part time)      | Tel: 0114849909  
  [email: outreach@autismsouthafrica.org] |

**Note:** Telephone numbers have been redacted for privacy.
All people with autism will enjoy all rights and opportunities to meet their needs and fulfill their potentials, throughout their lives, as equal members of their families and communities.
Training

Accreditation

- Health Professions Council of South Africa
- South African Council of Social Services
- South African Council for Educators
- Registered with National Treasury as a service provider

Workshops Hosted

- Eastern Cape
- Gauteng
- Free State
- Kwa-Zulu Natal
- Limpopo
- Mpumalanga
- North West
- Northern Cape
- Lesotho

Workshops Hosted

- 0
- 10
- 20
- 30
- 40
- 50
- 60

25-26 June Autism Symposium 2018

NWU® | a:sa
1016 Individuals Attended our Workshops

- 103 Parents
- 20 Social Workers
- 276 Others
- 590 Educators
- 297 ECD Practitioners
- 26 Therapists
- 0 Doctor

St Stithians College  Orange Farm Skills Centre  Sizanani LSEN
Maitiso Centre  Yetta Nathan Centre  Diepsloot Skills Centre
Syathandwa Stimulation Centre  Thabo-Vuyo LSEN  Cresset House
Jhb School for Autism  Danie van Zyl Hall  Community Ministry
Little Busy Bees Day Care  Nobantu Day Care  Zola Clinic
Kingswood Christian School  Mohlodong Creche  Ikageng Community Centre
Sedibeng East DoE  St Francis Care Centre  Margaretha Old Age Home

Games to play based on the child’s level of learning:

- Listening
- Reading
- Motor Skills
- Social Skills
- Fine Motor Skills
- Language Development
- Cognitive Abilities
- Memory
- Problem Solving
- Social Skills
- Emotional Skills
- Creativity
- Motor Skills
- Fine Motor Skills
Northern Cape

284 Individuals attended our workshops

- 106 Parents
- 30 Educator
- 0 Doctor
- 8 Social Workers
- 31 ECD practitioners
- 63 Therapists
- 81 Others

Prieska Clinic
Jan Kemp Dorp
DeafSA
Jannie Brink School

Thusong Service Centre
Ritchie Kagisho Care Centre
Colesburg Library

Department of Education NC
Gruispad Teater
Kimberley Complex Hospital
North West Province

70 Individuals attended our workshops

- 24 Parents
- 45 Educators
- 1 Doctor
- 0 Social Workers
- 0 ECD practitioners
- 0 Therapists
- 0 Others

MM Sebitloane Special School  Boereplaas Nature Reserve

*Note: The reason for the drop in the numbers for the North-West Province was due to a staff vacancy. The position was filled in May 2018.*
438 Individuals attended our workshops

- 107 Parents
- 168 Educators
- 6 ECD Practitioners
- 51 Therapists
- 20 Doctors
- 86 Others
- 0 Social Workers

Small Talk Educare
Hudson Park Primary
Little Life Clinic

Autism Sinethemba
Quest School
Lady Frere DSD

Phumelela Special Care
Abbotsford School
Kwa-Zulu Natal

270 Individuals attended our workshops

- 90 Parents
- 115 Educators
- 0 Doctors
- 0 Social Workers
- 0 ECD practitioners
- 21 Therapists
- 44 Others

Scottsville Clinic
St Raphael's Special School
H.S. Ebrahim Special School
Vulekani Special School
Vumanisabelo Special School
Reunion Special School
Pinetown Civic Centre
Free State

607 Individuals Attended our workshops

- 69 Parents
- 222 Educators
- 3 Social Workers
- 214 ECD Practitioners
- 15 Therapists
- 84 Others

Nyakallong ECD Centre
Viljoenskroom (Ntataise)
Parys City Hall
LifeLine Welkom
Motheo ECD Centre
Trompsburg

Katleho ECD Centre
Kgotsong Library
Thiboloha Special School
Nala Re Thabile CYCC
Mohau ECD Centre

Maluti Hoogland School
SL Sefatsa Library
Lesedi Disability Day Care
Petrusburg Disability Centre
Boitumelong Special School

69 Parents
222 Educators
3 Social Workers
214 ECD Practitioners
15 Therapists
84 Others
Mpumalanga

93 Individuals attended our workshops

- 9 Parents
- 0 Educators
- 0 Doctors
- 1 ECD Practitioners
- 1 Therapist
- 81 Others
- 1 Social Workers

Lesedi Pathways Disability Centre
Moutse Clinic
Sizakele Stimulation Center
Limpopo

349 Individuals attended our workshops

- 106 Parents
- 3 Social Workers
- 139 Others
- 41 Educators
- 43 ECD Practitioners
- 3 Doctors
- 14 Therapists

Mankweng Hospital
Matobole LSEN
Paledi Disability Centre

Thusang LSEN
Usi Mpire Centre
Sekhukhune District DoE

Tivhumbeni Centre
Phokwane Community Hall
Lebowakgomo

Who are the Others?

Volunteers  South African Police Service  Community Leaders
Teaching Assistants  Taxi Drivers  Swimming Instructors
Nurses  Church Members  Traditional healers

Department of Education District Officials
General Public  Learners at schools  Psychologists
Family members  Department of Agriculture  Caregivers
Autistic Adults  House Mothers

FEM
Empowerment and Support

Gauteng – Gloria Gkikas

Aim of Parent Support Programme:

The primary aim of this project remains the support of people with Autism within their family unit and community by supporting and stabilising the family so that the family is better able to take care of the child/person with Autism. The focus is to provide holistic support and psychological counselling for parents and carers of persons with Autism especially on diagnosis with a focus on the early intervention principles.

This past year has again been a fruitful one with good outcomes:

A. Parent Counselling and Support:

The first contact with parents whose children have been newly diagnosed happens at the Neuro-developmental clinics, immediately after diagnosis and in the past year there is notable increase in the number of parents seen at Neuro-development clinics and Rahima Moosa hospital has seen the most significant increase.

In the past year we received 345 referrals of newly diagnosed children, giving an average of about 10 new referrals per month, with 150 children still awaiting diagnosis. To meet the demand and reduce the waiting period for diagnosis, CHBAH has introduced a Wednesday Neuro clinic and RMMCH has increase the number of Consulting doctors for their Neuro clinic as well as an increase in the number of Registrars attending. The main hospitals for diagnosis are CM Johannesburg Academic Hospital, Rahima Moosa Coronation Hospital, CH Baragwaneth Hospital, South Rand Hospital (Dr. Bezuidenhout) and Edenvale Hospitals, Dr. Thompson there. Steve Biko Academic Hospital also started operating a Neuro Clinic in early 2017 and is now important referral point for those in the Pretoria area. These are crucial developments in the early management of ASD.

B. Counselling:

Counselling is offered to all parents as and when the need arises and is on an ongoing basis. The continuous increase in the need for telephonic counselling clearly indicates the continuous support needs of families even those whom we refer to as stable. I continue to see parents for counselling at our offices on Mondays and Wednesdays. In April-June this year we have seen an unprecedented numbers of parents and families for counselling and support. Many families struggle with the challenging behaviour of their child with ASD causing tremendous discord within the family and resulting in emotional and financial stresses. Family relationships, especially marital relationships
are often impacted and there has been a notable increase in the need for counselling in these areas. We have referred many cases to the JCCC Unit located on the 2nd floor of the CMI building.

C. Stats

Our stats show that in the period from July 2017 to March 2018 there have been over 500 scheduled appointments at our offices of which a large number of these were parents of newly diagnosed children, 70% of these were referrals from the Neuro-developmental clinics and the rest were by word of mouth and from other professionals, about the same as the previous year.

There has been a notable increase in telephone counselling and information on Autism requests mostly concentrated around the months of April- June this year.

The monthly stat forms give more accurate numbers and areas of intervention.

D. School Placements:

The process of admissions introduced by the Department of Education in April last year has been positive in that the GED will allocate a school to a parent and we now do not need to be phoning around looking for possible placement. The concern, as was expressed in the previous report, remains the manner in which parents are treated at the GDE and the very long waiting period before a school is eventually allocated. The waiting for placement is a very stressful time for parents and some parents have been waiting for more than a year. This reflects in my report for the third year running and though discussions around this have taken place there has been no real change in the manner that district personnel handle parents requesting enrolment. A very positive move that may eventually see the efficiency of school placement is the launch of the OUT OF SCHOOL CAMPAIGN.

E. Parent Support Groups:

Our meet groups happen within the STARS (Siblings Group) framework and are convened quarterly. In the past year we had four STARS- PSG meetings and convened 4 PSG Facilitators meetings with training and support as the focus topics. The group size is about 15-30 parents and these are often very interactive. Feedback remains very positive regarding these groups.

Other Activities:

Social Work Student Placement: We had a 4th year student placed with us at Autism; South Africa this year from January to September 2018 and she contributed a lot to the parent empowerment workshops that were held at the beginning of 2018. She also had Case Work and a Community Project to complete that will reported on in the next year report. There has been a number of enquiries regarding Research on ASD at
Postgraduate levels, these requests are redirected to our National Director for consideration.

**Collaboration with the Legal System:** We have assisted with a number of cases which involved children with Autism. We have had referrals from The Children’s Court and various offices of Children’s Advocates. This year we again assisted with a number of cases such as child abuse and some cases where the child is placed in a place of care or parents needing residential care. We also had input in cases from Teddy Bear Clinic and the CMJAH Social Work Department. Interesting, we also had a number of cases involving the misuse of the Care Dependency Grant, and or the declined applications.

Finally, the past year has been a good and productive year though with some challenges but we look forward to a better year ahead!!!

**North West Province – Vacant/Dineo Mosiane**

+27 83 315 6599 Parent support group

**Eastern Cape – Antoinette Bruce-Alexander**

WhatsApp Group – 0726782452
Afrikaans WhatsApp Group - 0824655805

**Free State – Selinah Jele**

WhatsApp: 0760981025.

**Limpopo - Mary Moeketsi**

Support Groups:
Mankweng Parent Support Group
Autism Limpopo

**Mpumalanga – Mary Moeketsi**

Mkhonto Parent Support Group
Mbombela Parent Support Group
Ermelo Parent Support Group
Siyabuswa Parent Support Group
Support to Families: xx families supported

Support Groups
1. Vryheid Support Group
2. Moms with Passion
3. Autism Moms

WhatsApp Support Group: 0789514560
Head Office: National Education Specialist: Vicky Lamb

The year has gone by incredibly fast, and while going through my calendar to check on events to report on, I realised just how busy it had been and continues to be at Autism South Africa.

Training

March 2017 started with attending Studio III training with Chantel from Quest School in Port Elizabeth. There were a few great pointers that I think we all took away from the training, namely the low arousal approach to behaviour, which I have been incorporating into our Hands on Training.

Hands on Autism Training

During the year, I have hosted 10 Hands on Autism trainings, with Antoinette hosting an additional 1 in East London. Most of our courses have been fully booked, and in some cases have been overbooked. We have had a few cancelled courses during this period, but the momentum is picking up – we have also seen the need to revise the Hands on Autism Course. Our training is still taking place in Johannesburg, the Eastern Cape and the Northern Cape.

Other Training

1. Parent Support Group Training (2 sessions)
   The first session I conducted with the parents was on behaviour. I thoroughly enjoyed these groups, and often found that we went off topic in discussions. The parents seemed to find the discussions worthwhile and were able to support and advise each other on what had worked for them. In my second session, we looked at providing for the family and the siblings – I focussed on helping parents identify burnout within themselves, and we looked at ways they could look after themselves.

2. SAVF Margaretha Ackerman Old Age Home in Pretoria
   I was approached by the Old Age Home, as one of the staff members were concerned that they may have residents with autism. We did some basic training with the staff on how to help the elderly and specifically focussed on routine. Unfortunately the research on the elderly is limited, and I did feel a bit out of my depth here.

3. Swimming Workshops
   I have hosted 3 workshops for various swimming organisations this year. Each one has been received well. For these workshops, I present an introduction to Autism
and then we do some practicalities to help with the children while they are attending their swimming lesson.

4. DBE Differentiation Workshop
   It was a privilege to be able to present at this workshop together with the Department of Basic Education. It’s great to see that autism is being acknowledged, not just by special needs schools, but by all schools. While we still have a long way to go before we reach a truly inclusive society – we are at least on the right track with government.

5. Gateway School: Training on Sexuality and Growing Up
   Gateway requested a session on sexuality and growing up – during the session, we go through practical ways to help learners navigate this period, and I also use this as an opportunity to remind educators and therapists, that this is a very normal part of life, and our teens will engage in sexual behaviours, but it’s up to use to help them understand the changes their bodies are going through as well as explain what is appropriate behaviour and what is not appropriate behaviour.

6. TEACCH
   I have been very excited to be included in the TEACCH tutor training group with Maggi Golding. While we have been using the methods that are a part of TEACCH, we have been unable to call it TEACCH. However, recently, we have learnt that we may not become accredited TEACCH tutors, as they want the tutors to all be trained in North Carolina – this is currently under investigation by Maggi.

7. Upington Training
   At the beginning of 2018 I was asked to go to Upington to present Hands on Autism 1 to the teachers at Oasis Skills Development Centre in Upington. We did the course for the first three days, and on the fourth day we focussed on classroom setup, and on the final day, I asked the participants to do a role play with their classroom setup. The role play was definitely a hit, and something I would like to include more in future training.

Home, school and classroom support sessions

School and Classroom Support

I have not had many requests for school and classroom support this year, however there were three.

1. M.M Sebitloane Special School in the North West Province – here we assisted the teachers with their classroom set up as well as doing some basic training on autism with them. The educators and support staff were eager to learn and were very eager to show their classrooms and what they were doing with their learners. Funds
were limited at the time, and they kept explaining that they would like to do more but are not getting the support from their provincial education department.

2. Kempton Park Laerskool – The school contacted me as they were concerned about two learners in the school. One had just been diagnosed, and the other child, the staff suspected he had autism. I observed both learners, and the educators were very happy to implement strategies to support the learners. The school is an inclusive school and is willing to accept learners on the spectrum.

3. Little Shades and Nolu – Little Shades began as a breakaway from Little Gems which is a respite centre for children with special needs. Some parents from Little Gems began Little Shades in Kyalami. I presented the introduction to autism to them and offered 3 on-site support sessions to guide the staff. Unfortunately, the owners and the parents had a fall out and so a new centre was started which is now in Benoni.

4. Little Camelot – This is a mainstream nursery school in Pretoria who had been accepting children on the spectrum and seeing great improvement. They then decided that they would like to set up a proper classroom for their learners with ASD. The principal identified a teacher, and she attended our Hands-on Autism training session. After which, we were able to support her in setting up her classroom and offering her support with her learners.

**Home Support Sessions**

I always enjoy home support sessions and working with parents. While this is a challenge, the parents are often incredibly grateful for the support, and suddenly no longer feel alone. I was able to conduct 6 home support sessions during the year, where I was able to assist with setting up routines and schedules for the family, as well as giving them general information on ASD.

**Other Interesting Events:**

1. Klerksdorp Hospital
   Klerksdorp hospital psychology department had an “open day” of sorts, where they invited parents to attend a talk which I did. We were then able to sit with some of the parents in a session with their doctors and chat about some of the challenges the parents were facing and then help them with strategies.

2. African Regional International Meeting for Autism Research
   This was certainly a highlight for the year – being able to hear the research that is happening globally as well as within Africa and South Africa was great.

3. Teens Group
I have managed to get the teens group going again – this seems to be slow, and I think parents are nervous about how their teen might behave in a strange and/or new environment. We will keep going though, and hopefully this will grow.

4. Play Africa
   Play Africa asked us to advise them on their new project – a sensory wall specifically designed for children with autism, or with sensory processing difficulties – the idea being that they will eventually create a whole playground. Their aim with the project is to create a judgement free zone for our families. It has been great collaborating with the team at Play Africa, and we look forward to working with them even more in the future.

5. Josh Crickmay
   For me, this was definitely another highlight. Hearing Josh speak and seeing his incredible work was incredibly insightful, and perhaps the start of really beginning to understand that autism is a difference, with disabilities that come along.

6. Autism Navigator
   This has been an incredible opportunity, and I have really enjoyed partaking in the Early Intervention Practitioner training. I am looking forward to working with families in a way that supports them even more.

Reflections

While the year was an incredibly busy year, it was a year of learning and growth for me. There are certainly challenges that we face every day at Autism South Africa, however it’s our focus on the one family that we help at a time that keeps us going (Thanks Sandy for always reminding us of this!). I am looking forward to another year of even more growth and learning, and hopefully being able to support more people on the autism spectrum as well as their families, loved ones and communities.

Thank you to Sandy and Claudia for all the support, as well as to the board for all their support.

Free State – Selinah Jele

On the 2 April 2017 CELEBRATE THE UNIQUENESS OF AUTISM Light it up blue (LIUB) is a global campaign that includes landmarks, buildings, local communities and people like myself who come together on the April 2nd for World Autism Awareness day to light the world blue. This year the Free State province Light It Up Blue was welcomed by Oorlog/World war Vroue/women’s monument in Bloemfontein.
I also created awareness for Autism within Bloemside phase 2 community mall. Discovering that majority of the community of phase 6 which consist of Clinic members that attended, community health workers and medical officers etc, were unaware of what Autism is or the effect that it has on Parents and Children with from Autism. However, they were encouraged to celebrate it and empower those caregivers within the community who are caring for autistic children.

**Maluti Hoogland Special School Bethlehem**

The Autism workshop was for teachers from and around 70 schools in Bethlehem. April was a good choice as it is awareness month.

On the June 2017 Ms Mokone at FS Department of education invited parents in Bloemfontein to discuss the challenges they face as parents of children who are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder at Pholoho special school.

The meeting was very fruitful and many of the parents were very encouraged and seeing the light, the issue about waiting list was addressed. Ms Mokone said she has spoken to special needs school to ask if they have any unused classes so far none have. The special need school in Xhariep will be starting 2 classrooms for autistic learners.

**Toddler was found chained and tied to the bed in Kgotsong; Bothaville the court came to verdict.**

The court comes to verdict on the 2 August 2017 at Bothaville court. Danette the social worker that is involve in the case said/comment that it’s a shame that no one is willing to accommodate the child in to safe house she hopes in the future more safe houses will be able to accommodate ASD children. The protective services agency said it had no records of past involvement with the family. The court has come to final decision that the child will stay with mother only on one condition that Autism South Africa (a; sa) intervene. There will be two supervisor session a month parent support and counseling.

On the September 2017 Department of education in Xhariep district conducted Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) Programme for school – Level Implementation.

I hosted workshops during November 2017 in Brandford, Parys and Oddendalrus.

December 2017 - Distribution of brochures at shopping centres and medical facilities. The year started well, parent calling in seeking educational placement as province has few schools available.

January - February 2018 Hosted workshops at the following towns - Trompsburg, Edenburg, Jagersfontein, Petrusburg, Thaba Nchu, Faursmith and Qwa-Qwa.
February 2018 Meeting attended Social Development Qwa-Qwa task team on development of ASD school, Blaze academy staff training and curriculum for the school, Social Development Bloemfontein planning of WAAD in Bergmansquare, Inclusive Education Welkom – improve of Disability centre.

February 2018 I was invited to participate in the stakeholder planning meeting on Autism (QwaQwa Autism Forum). The Department of Social Development, The Department of Health and Department of Education as well as Autism South Africa. We discussed the concern of higher Autistic number who are having challenges which relates to accommodation and educational facility in the region, but due to limited resources and other factors like lack of enough knowledge by community at large these children receive little to no help at all. As such they end up struggling their whole life as their development is affected physically and mentally. With this in mind the main focus for the mean time will be dedicated to helping children with Autism in identifying/establishment of a suitable building to accommodate ASD learner only as there is high need of educational placement.

March 2018 - The collaborative project with Department of Education began out of a desire to spread our support. In 2018, we welcome a wonderful, creative approach and hard-working year. Currently the Department of Health provides coaching to families, it requires parents or caregivers to provide appropriate coaching to their child at home. The empowering of Parents will be a yearly project across the Free State that offers training to parents that have Autistic children, where their main concern is that of behaviour of a challenging nature. This program guides parents by providing and implementing skills around decreasing behaviour that is challenging at home.

**Eastern Cape – Antoinette Bruce-Alexander**

**Starter Kits Donated**
OR Thambo Center for Autism requested and the donation was delivered to my office in East London where Nomaza Nkohla collected it.

**Hands On Autism Training at Autism Sinethemba**
We hosted Hands On Autism Training in three different locations/venues this year, Autism Sinethemba – East London, Quest School – Port Elizabeth and Coega Village – Port Elizabeth.
3 Days Hands On Autism 1, 6 – 8 March 2017 – Autism Sinethemba
3 Days Hands On Autism 1, 24 – 26 May 2017 – Autism Sinethemba
5 Days Hands On Autism 2, 26 – 28 July 2017 – Autism Sinethemba
3 Days Hands On Autism 1 – 02 – 04 August 2017 – Quest School Port Elizabeth

**Information Sessions / Workshops:**
Newspaper Craft Project for Adults with Autism:
Regular Saturday workshops with this group has been held, with registers kept of all meetings and expenses for the group. The skills are taught to new members by me or Mr Gary Robertson and his son Adrian, the only other very regular and productive members of our group. We have 10 members who attend regularly, this includes young members,
parents, care givers and volunteers. We have seen a trend of new members joining, staying for a few workshops and then not returning, it may be related to skills not easy to learn, transport issues or parents not being involved and committed.

Introduction to Autism, Workshops and talks:
Little Life Baby Clinic, East London;
Abbotsford Christian School; Lady Frere Community – Dept of Social Development;
ITEC, East London; Hudson Park Primary School; Dept of Social Development, NU1 Mdantsane; Small Talk Educare, Cambridge.

Support to families
Parent Support: more than 250 families assisted face-to-face, telephonic, email or social media
Support Group Meetings were suspended in East London at the end of 2014 due to lack of attendance and disagreement on a date and time. But, we have started a Social Media Support system that works very well and can reach more families because a specific time, date and location is not required. Our Whatsapp group is growing and parents actively participate in discussions frequently. I am also being asked constantly to add another parent by other parents on the group. This is a time-consuming group but it works and is accessible to all at any time. That is what support is all about to me. If you need information or someone to talk to, you don’t want to wait until a specific day or time to be able to get an answer or the emotional support you need now.
I have really wanted to start a Whatsapp Support Group in isiXhosa in 2017/8. This has not materialized. It is something to consider in the future, but I will have to find a suitable “Admin” for this group because I don’t speak isiXhosa well enough to understand all communication. This has been my biggest problem with this group – language barrier – and no one dedicated enough to start this group for me.

I attended the Autism Symposium in Potchefstroom as a member of Autism South Africa in 28 June 2017.- Thank you Sandy and NEC for this learning opportunity.

Classroom and School Support – Department of Education
OR Thambo Autism Center – Mthatha – Nomaza; Tsolo Special School - Tozama;
College Street Primary School – Janey Stevens, Craig Graham is the new principal of the school and is doing a lot of good work. He has made some very positive changes. Lisa Welch is one of the new teachers, I did a little “calming down” talk for her at the school at assembly; Parklands Special School – Eugene Marais and Nicolene Botha, I was guest speaker for their prize giving; Khayalethu Special School – Khaya Ntsham, Mr Mdikane; Victory Kids, PE – Zeidie; Autism Eastern Cape, are considering starting an Outreach Classroom in Uitenhage, Kwanabuhle area. Vicky and I met them when we were in PE for Hands on Autism training to see how we could both strengthen our working relationships. Bellafides Cottage School – Clarissa Masola, Ongoing support to this school, I love them! Quest School – we have a very good working relationship with Quest school and Lottie de Vries, their wonderful principal.
Abundant Life Christian School, King Williams Town; Toddle Inn, Nahooch, East London;
Hudson Park, Foundation Phase, Primary School and Eaglets, East London AND – Brenda Moss, Dane Channon; Yeletu Eliphulo Center, Mthatha; Gonubie Primary School;
Beaconhurst Primary School; Mrs Njotini, Mrs Tokwe – Provincial Office, Dept of Education, Zwelitsha; Local District Based Support Team, East London District – Miss Bulelwa Koyo Dept of Education HIV/AIDS and Life Skills Section, Rubusana College, Mdantsane Vukuhambe Special School; Toddlers Paradise, Uitenhage; Phumelela Special Care Centre; Merryvale Special School; Masibambane Center, Debenek, King Williams Town area; ELSEN School, Port Elizabeth; Miss Koto, Full Service School, Lady Frere; Learners with Severe and Profound Intellectual Disabilities Support Team working at Dept of Education, Rubusana College, NU.

**Department of Health:**

Regular contact with the following Hospitals and Clinics:

Grey Hospital in King Williams Town; Frontier Hospital, Queenstown; Frere Hospital, East London; Cicelia Makiwane Hospital, Mdantsane; Port Alfred Hospital; Nelson Mandela Hospital – Mthatha.

I also keep in contact regularly with the Speech Therapists and Occupational Therapists at these hospitals – we work well together.

**Dept of Social Development**

Local Buffalo City Municipality; District Office, East London and Provincial Office, Bhisho/Zwelitsha; SASSA, East London, Port Elizabeth, Mthatha; Mental Health – Port Elizabeth

**Government Meetings – Other:**

Provincial Coordinating Committee Meeting – Office of the Premier, Eastern Cape, SG’s Office, Bhisho – Another committee established to see to the needs of children with disabilities in schools. The organiser transferred back to Gauteng, so this initiative ended!

SANASE, ASA, HOUSE OF TRADITIONAL LEADERS meeting appointment set up for 10 December 2017, postponed till February 2018, then further postponed till later in the year.

Persons with Disability Parliament preparation meeting at Public Participation Boardroom, with Mrs Sishuba, Disability Parliament took place 01 September 2017.

**Universities Supported**

Fort Hare University, Alice; Fort Hare University, East London; Buffalo City FET College

**Assist with University Students studies**

DUKE Corporate Education, she needed help with general information about ASD and support groups in the communities, upliftment for parents and caregivers in the communities specially in the rural areas.

**Networking**
Areas Visited
Buffalo City
Mdantsane
King Williams Town
Bhisho
Port Elizabeth
Duncan Village
Zwelitsha, King Williams Town
Debenek, King Williams Town area
Kwanobuhle, Ezibeleni, Queenstown
Lady Frere

General
Autism South Africa – Eastern Cape is a registered service provider for the Department of Education and training tenders for training of educators were submitted, training was executed. Mrs Towke and Mrs Njotini was always in charge of this, but recently I have learned that Mr Lourens Putter has taken over this function, now although we have sent in tenders, we have not yet received any training orders for the latter part of 2018. (2016/2017 - We have completed a number of Hands On Autism 1 and 2 workshops for Dept of Education so far and still more are scheduled for the next year. - We are still waiting for the outcome of the last tender, the Dept of Education requested dates for training or 120 people, we gave them 4 dates but nothing was confirmed yet.)

Organisation for Autism Awareness Big Walk started in February 2017 with route planning and school involvement. The Big Walk for Autism took place on the 20th April 2017, we nearly doubled our numbers from the last year!
It was a lovely day, we started at the Orient Theatre Wishing Well and walked the length of the Esplanade and returned to the Wishing Well again to finish. We had juice and water sponsored by our very big Hotel group, the Premier Group of Hotels. Thank you to Mr Barrington – General manager of Premier Hotels - for the use of their bus to ferry participants as well.
Advocacy, advocacy, advocacy!
A:SA, EC is a member of the Amatola Welfare Development Forum, EC Disability Economic Empowerment Trust Forum, Buffalo City ECD Forum and EC NGO Coalition
Forum and attends as many meetings as I can, but I always get the minutes of meetings and I am always allowed to email my responses and input.

Contacted Print Media to place articles about Autism in:
Daily Dispatch and GO Express
Short Radio interviews on:
Wild Coast FM
Umhlobo Wenene FM
Link FM
Algoa FM
I have also had requests to speak on RSG, DISA FM and Channel Africa for April 2018

ONGOING 2017/2018:
Keep regular contact with the 6 NDC Clinics in the Eastern Cape. Frere Hospital, Cecelia Makiwane Hospital, Grey Hospital, Frontier Hospital, Port Elizabeth Hospital and Nelson Mandela Hospital – Mthatha

Big news:
2017 Business Woman of the Year Finalist
I was nominated by a grandmother of one of my little people I have helped over the last 5 years with school and early intervention as one of the Business Women of the year – 2017 - for my work in the field of Autism, working in the Eastern Cape Province as Regional Development Officer for Autism SA. I had to submit a whole lot of information about myself, my work, my family, etc. I was nominated in the Social Entrepreneurs Category. After a long screening and interview process, I was short-listed as one of the 3 finalists for this category. We had a Big Gala Dinner where all the winners were announced, and although I did not win my category, I am now part of the Business Woman's Association as a Circle of Champion Winner (all the Finalists and Winners belong to this group). It was awesome to get all dressed up and pretty, chauffeured to the venue, be treated like a princess for a night to receive my Certificate on a stage full of special women. I am also one of their Mentors for two programs; Personal Mentor / Mentee project where I was paired off with a wonderful lady, Stacey Rossoux – our Neurologist from Frere Hospital, and Adopt an NGO Mentorship Project where I could nominate an NGO for Young Adults with Disabilities, Second Chance Skills Training Program.

Still Big News – Its still going strong!!
In September 2016, I started a new Autism Adult Skills Training Project called the East London Adult Autism Newspaper Craft Project. We were very fortunate to have Lungi Sokhulu from JHB to come to East London and help us start this project with full funding from Autism SA. We have a group of young adults and their parents or care givers who attend every Saturday afternoon. We received training from Lungi in four phases and after the fourth training, the regular members received a certificate from her. It is so exciting to see the growth and development of our group and the young men in this group. We – the parents – also have a lot of fun making articles and the young men enjoy being with each other in a structured environment. We meet every Saturday from 2 to 4 pm. We have a regular donor of newspaper and we have a good supply every week to work with. I mainly facilitate new skills training for the new members.
article we make is a handbag which is sold for R180.00 per bag. But most of the young men also make coasters, pot holders, display pieces and wall hangings. The young men earn 90% of all the money received for the articles they sell, the project gets 10% to buy clasps, trimmings and glue / varnish. We have not advertised any of our goods yet because it sells itself. Where ever we go and have our handbags, people want to know where they can buy them and ....................... SOLD! The biggest plus for me is the interaction I see between the members of the group. This group also serves as a support group for parents we so badly need. All our young men are about the same age and we have a lot of similar problems to deal with. The aim with this group is to give the young adults an income and independence. It also will provide them with work to do from home but still to be productive and busy. This group is dedicated and hard working. We took part in a few Year End Markets with our group members, this generated a lot of interest from our community, we sold a lot of our young people’s items, they took part in the sales, money, displays, etc. Very good to see how they have grown.

(On the side: I still run and am very involved with my brainchild and baby, Autism Sinethemba. Our school turned 10 in May this year and has grown from 6 children and 3 staff members to 38 children and 13 staff members in the last 10 years. We will shortly have to increase our numbers and classrooms to 45 children because we have a waiting list of 12 children for 2019 already and not enough space for them all.)

Northern Cape – Elfreda Baartman

The Northern Cape has grown in knowledge as it has been empowered through various training sessions. Teachers as far as Springbok as well as the department of education in Springbok attended a 3 hour workshop. I was so overwhelmed as 3 towns, Steinkopf, Kleinsee, and Springbok came together to be educated. Department of Social development in Upington also received Autism training. Prieska clinic was so excited and received me with the greatest hospitality. Back in Kimberley we had our annual Big Walk with Jannie Brink Special school which was well attended and a huge success.

Gruispad theatre invited me to attend their annual graduation of their Autism Friendship circle. Doctor Marlene Zwiegens started this initiative where she creates an opportunity for Grd. 11 learners to learn about autism and befriend a child with autism within the Autism friendship circle. After the graduation myself and our National Director, Sandy Uswald did a radio interview at the local radio station, Teemaneng FM, hosted by Marlene Zwiegens.

The Northern Cape is under a lot of strain with the increase of children being diagnosed with autism. We still have no autism specific school in the Northern Cape and this is a huge concern. Statistics show that every 45 minutes a child is born with autism within South Africa.

The Northern Cape also started with “in house training” where we give parents training in the comfort and privacy of their homes. We want to create a safe place where parents can ask open questions about their child and the way forward. It also gives the parents
who don’t have anyone to look after their child with autism an opportunity to gain knowledge and be empowered.

We will continue to be there for families and everyone affected by autism through continuous training and referrals to relevant stakeholders and resources.

Kwa-Zulu Natal – Rosemary Shezi

KwaZulu – Natal Autism Awareness has increased incredibly and the services available seem to be not enough. Enthusiasm from most government Special schools is very positive and gives hope for a better future for ASD. However, there is some concern with confusion over the new program to support out of school children with severe to profound disabilities. Some schools misinterpret this as a program to take out learners with Autism that require high level support.

Newly diagnosed children’s numbers are growing at such high speed. One would like to send a message of gratitude for the amazing commitment and dedication of the KwaZulu – Natal Children’s Hospital with the humble and compassionate dedicated service led by Dr Vasantha Govender and the whole team. A special Thank you to Thembi the administration and bookings officer for her tireless dedication and unwavering support she gives us and our Autism Community in ensuring that all appointments are observed and all requirement documentation and prerequisites are in place. INkosi Albert Luthuli Paediatric Neurology and Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Behaviour Clinic give our community undivided attention. It was a sad and strenuous adjustment when the Behaviour Clinic at Greys Hospital closed down due to specialist doctors exiting the department of health. Grateful that The Townhill Hospital Child and Adolescent Clinic took over without complaints under the humble service of Dr Jhazbhay, Dr Vander Walt and Team. Our Community Health Centres are also giving us unwavering support and service. The Disability and Rehabilitation Services unit at Provincial Office has done incredible work with their dedicated Community Service Officers who are very passionate and hands on ASD, throughout the whole province. A big Thank you to the KZN Department of Health Deputy Director of Disability and Rehabilitation Services Mr Sthembiso Blose for motivating and fully supporting his staff. Thank you for the working relationship formed with Department Of Health EThekwnini District Review board and advice and support. In life we lose some and gain others, I am grateful for the increase of Paediatric Neurologists in private practice in our province. Some of them we cried foul when they exited the government system, but we were grateful they did not abandon the province instead went into private practice which is extremely short of these specialist doctors and therapists. Our Province was even fortunate to have two new specialist doctors in the private sector from Cape Town a huge relief as two of our long serving doctors in private practice are preparing for their exit. So my referral pathway has increased. A big Thank You to Dr Madekurozwa for her tireless support to us and families in the Pietermaritzburg area in spite of her busy schedule in her private practice. Check our website for our list of service providers.
It was a pleasure and an educative and informative experience to be invited by the KZN Legislature Quality of Life Portfolio Committee to join them on Oversight Visits to Amajuba District Special Schools. Thank you for entrusting us to be of positive value to the province. Contribution and ensuring that ASD is not left out in services provided in our province is my main priority as I serve in the KZN Disability Parliament and Disability Forums.

2018 Schools Re opening took off on a very sad and tragic note when one of Autism Affected Learners from Ekuthuthukeni Special School ran away from home only for his mutilated, partially decomposed body to be found after seven days of frantic search. We are grateful to community, the SAPS and all rescue and search teams who worked tirelessly in search of the late Nana Majola 10 years old at time of passing on. A painful start off to the year for the Majola Family, the School, EFolweni Community, may his soul rest in peace. This led to a community awareness campaign in the area and a learning experience for our communities to be vigilant of our special needs people.

A big Thank you to Umkhanyakude District Municipality for affording us the opportunity to conduct and facilitate a workshop for their District Disability Forum and part of their Executive Committee. To ETthekwini Municipality for continued support and sponsorships for our Annual Big Walk in Verulam and venues for conducting workshops, trainings and consultative meetings. Amajuba Municipality for your support and enthusiasm in Autism awareness and information sharing.

Thank you to Creative Arts College for sponsoring a graphic Design Certificate learner ship to one of our youth who did very well and graduated. Grateful for Public Works National Office and the National Home Builders Regulation Council On accepting two of our youth with ASD to undergo training in Construction hoping they will be selected to the Construction Business Management Training as well. To the Harambee Youth Employment Acceleration Program, we are grateful for mentoring and coaching one of our youth and assisted in his work placement at Woolworths at The Galleria. To KZN Department of Economic Development Tourism and Environmental affairs, we are grateful for the consultative workshop they offered for parents of and youth and adults with Autism in Pinetown to help our persons with entrepreneur skills. Two of our youth have registered new companies and a huge Thank you to KZN SEDA for mentoring them. Our young aspiring entrepreneurs.

The working relationship and assistance for the stimulation centres that accept our children for early intervention and learning is amazing. One has referred so much that some have waiting lists now. A positive collaboration with other NGOs has kept our pulse beating and smooth and relevant referrals achieved, at times there is a short understanding of certain disabilities and picking up on red flag and concluding for those affected. This is where we refer and give relevant support to families and persons affected, by keeping our working relation healthy. Working with Youth, care givers and Social Workers of Excelsior and UMLazi Child and Youth Care centres is continuing and positive.
Attending the South African Association of Child and Adolescents Psychiatrists and Allied professionals Congress in Stellenbosch was very fruitful and educative. Networking whilst there has since extended my network. New Research findings have assisted one to give fresh information when conducting and hosting workshops. I have offered quite a number of tailor-made Autism Workshops to the schools, health professionals and parents. An exclusive Heritage Day celebrating Learners with Autism at Malezulu- Daniel Mzamo Mega Special School was a blast. Thank you Mr Dlamini (Principal; LSEN), Mrs Msomi (Principal Mainstream), Miss Mthembu Autism Unit HOD and the whole School Team and District officials.

Hoping for great prospects and keeping to promises of authorities in executing promised programs from different budget votes from Province to local municipalities.

**Limpopo/Mpumalanga – Mary Moeketsi**

The year 2017 was a very good year in the two provinces, it was very interesting to see that things have shifted a bit, this time around in a hall of plus minus 50 if I asked if people if they know what ASD is, it is now not like years back where no one would know what I was talking about, the response will be like” I have an idea though I still don’t fully I understand or able to explain to others what it is.”

In Limpopo awareness happened in all he five districts of the province, this was done through communities, centres that cater for persons with disabilities, special needs schools, ECD’s and hospitals. These included trainings for educators, support staff and parents.

I gave talks at the provincial ECD seminar which was held at Seshigo and another seminar for the Youth Economic Empowerment in Burgersford, at these seminars a lot of people showed interest and listen attentively. Limpopo Economic Department (LEDA) which was the host of the seminar made an undertaking to collaborate with the disability forum in the province so that they are able to help young adults with disability and we emphasised the fact the it must not only be for people with physical disabilities, it has to be inclusive of other disabilities that are invisible like ASD, and because of the presence of the young adult on the spectrum, this made them listen to him talk about his challenges, starting of f with what he went through as a learner with autism.

There was provincial stakeholder forum meeting, the discussion about pillar 6 of the White Paper for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which was hosted by the office of the premier OSPD. The emphasis at this meeting was self-representation by people with disabilities, we had a full discussion about those who cannot self-represent and the was an agreement that parents and organisations are expected to talk on behalf of those who can’t advocate for themselves.

After Life Esidimeni tragedy provincial Department of Health called a mental health round table where organisations were invited, the discussion was about the difficulties faced by
the psychiatric hospitals in the province, issues of shortage of bed, human resources wrong referrals needles to assay that there was nothing much resolved as everything was blamed on the lack of budget.

In Mpumalanga awareness took place in three districts of the province, in hospitals, community serving allied workers were given training on ASD. Disability centres, ECD centres , main stream schools , communities and municipalities

There was a parent and therapists’ empowerment presentation by Dr Venter which was hosted by Mkhonto support group in Piet Retief. Children were assessed those who were not diagnosed with ASD were referred to the local hospital for further investigation and proper diagnosis of their disabilities.

Together with Ernie Els centre we visited two schools in Nkangala district this was going to be collaboration with the health bus that goes in schools to assess the health of learners in primary schools, the reason for this was to track some of the learners with learning disabilities because the health bus only concentrate on, oral eye dentistry, unfortunately after the passing of the coordinator the project was discontinued so we could not continue.

Mpumalanga provincial disability forum had a disability organisation s consultation which was held at Dullstroom at Epilepsy S.A offices. The OSPD which is now in DSD wanted to discuss issues that organisations have difficulties with especially organisations that have residential facilities, again this was after Life Esidimeni, but still there were no solutions because even in the province budget is the issue. In another forum meeting that we had, all departments were called to come and account to the forum what they are doing regarding employment and school placement of learners and adult with disabilities, for employment DOA told the forum that they are the only department that has reached 2% of employment of people with disabilities, that was not taken kindly by the forum because when questioned they said they struggle to find suitable persons with disabilities. Another department that also presented was DoEducation again this was another uphill battle according to them learners with special needs are catered for because they have 18 special needs school, when asked about ASD response is this is a complex condition we don’t understand it and we also don’t have capacity.

In conclusion, we are making good in roads in the provinces, though we still have a massive battle to fight for services for our people especially proper assessment and educational placement.

**North West Province – Dineo Mosiane**

Dineo only joined the A;SA team in June of 2018, but we thought it would be great to include an introduction to our newest team member, even though the annual report dates covered precedes her appointment.
“It was on Monday the 11th June 2018 when I arrived at Autism South Africa offices for Orientation week. I had been so anxious to arrive as my appointment date was on 1st June 2018. The previous week, I had spent, reading through all the materials that were sent to me to peruse. When the director called me in the end of May, to tell me that I got the appointment, I couldn’t help but scream for enthusiasm.

It feels great to live for a purpose, the purpose that really gave one no choice. Being an autism mom, one already lives a life of advocacy and educating others about autism spectrum disorders. What an empowering time it is now for me to be so informed and part of the Autism South Africa team. The information shared with others is researched and accurate, without doubt leaves one feeling like they have really done something right in life.

As Regional Development Officer for the North West province; I suppose there is no specific timeline to when I would have covered all the districts of this province, the important thing is to make an impact with every individual one comes to contact with. We all need to know ‘What is Autism! It’s not a question mark case but a definite exclamation case!!! Understanding my Key Performance Indicators was stressed upon even before orientation week.

That Monday was introduction day with Sandy the director. A world of information, salesforce and work policies awaited me to absorb. I met every one of the dedicated staff. The next four days I spent being mentored and schooled by the team: Vicky, Mary, Claudia, Elizabeth, Lerato and Koke. Still with a lot to learn, a laptop pregnant with information, a projector, a bag full of pamphlets and booklets, I headed home to Mahikeng by Friday, determined to be on par with this dedicated team.

I attended Autism Symposium for the first time ever on 25 June 2018 in NWU Potch. I felt like I was listening with a transformed mind and ear. I was and am part of the change that continues for persons living with autism. My seven year old autistic son was experiencing a whole new family life from that week as well, living with his aunt (my older sister, husband, and two kids) in Limpopo. We both had to mature during his transition, but he being there, gives me space to do the work and he gets to live with the family he always loved.

Then came the first week of July; Timian training, Spa day and Diamond Family Studies. Being in the same room and platform with professionals who live for Autism was inspiring. I even felt a small urge to go back to university and study further.

I have visited a few centres, some new and some with measurable experience, and those with varying difficulties. I am a quiet person but never shy. My public speaking days started in high school. I have given talks on ‘What is Autism?’ to SGB members in training, Organization of retired educators, Casual day fun-filled event organized by four disability centres, church conferences and others. I have spoken to parents doing some counselling; helped with schooling issues and just emotional support. I have penetrated
officials in Department of Social Development, Department of Education with Department of Health not far behind.

We revived the A;SA Newsletter in September 2018 with myself as editor. I ensured my first paid training in Rustenburg in August accompanied by four other special schools visits in that area. Keeping a close eye on my KPI and in great need to formulate a flow of activities aligned with them. Firstly starting in my municipality, get that formula right and then spread out to others.

We carry on; I carry on as part of the team. Every day one needs to have a plan of action and a packet of tissues in the pocket, just in case, but never be seen with tears in your eyes. We need to be strong warriors for the 1,08 million masses in S.A with Autism.

Every day I learn something new and carry the banner forth. This is my life, my son got me here. My sister, (his aunt) recently asked him if he knows where I work. He replied “No”. She told him “Your mom works for Autism South Africa, she talks to people about autism”. He confidently responded “Mmmmh…So mommy talks about me to people?” I was shocked to hear that story as I thought he would only be ready to hear about autism when he is maybe ten years old. I was wrong. He knows that his mom goes around talking to people ‘about him’ and autism. We started a facebook about his growth: ‘Kitso’s autism journey’ since 2015, which now has almost 400 followers. Thank you!

In June 2018 I showed him this slide from our presentations and asked him to copy it;

This below, was his version…Autistic kids Rock!
Different but Never Less!!
## Top Donors that have made a meaningful difference in the lives of people with ASD through their donations of funding:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Donor</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>National Lottery Commission</td>
<td>R1 858 140</td>
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<td>Department of Social Development</td>
<td>R1 000 000.00</td>
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<td>Federated Mutual Assurance Company</td>
<td>R850 000</td>
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<td>Estate of Beverly Gale Lanyon</td>
<td>R250 000</td>
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<td>CONCORD Trust</td>
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<td>JIM JOEL Trust Fund</td>
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<td>Southey Holding</td>
<td>R150 000</td>
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<td>Anglo American Chairman’s Fund</td>
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<td>RB Hagart</td>
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<td>HCI</td>
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<td>Naledi Forging (Pty) Ltd</td>
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<td>Naledi Inhlanganiso</td>
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<td>Insure Group</td>
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<td>Deloitte Payroll Giving</td>
<td>R40 700</td>
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<td>Electron Technologies</td>
<td>R20 000</td>
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**Top Donors that have made a meaningful difference in the lives of people with ASD through their donations of services and products to a total of XX!**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DSTV Media Sales</th>
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<td>Google</td>
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<td>MediaMark</td>
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<td>NewsClip</td>
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<td>Norton Rose Fulbright</td>
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<td>Octagon Chartered Accountants</td>
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<td>RAM Hand to Hand Couriers</td>
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<td>The House of Brave</td>
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<td>The Voortrekker Monument</td>
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<td>Intercarpets</td>
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**Further most appreciated benefactors of Autism South Africa**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fuchs Foundation</th>
<th>Caxton Group</th>
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<tr>
<td>Adv. RM Pearse and family</td>
<td>Arthur Bales</td>
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<tr>
<td>District Grand Lodge of SA: North</td>
<td>SAFlog</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr PR Johnson</td>
<td>Macquarie Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>WBHO</td>
<td>Chris Moreton</td>
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<td>Nicholas McDowell</td>
<td>Sham Jagathial</td>
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<td>MTSO</td>
<td>Charities Unlimited</td>
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<td>LANDSEC</td>
<td>BUCO Port Alfred</td>
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<td>TVL Electric Motors</td>
<td>Eden College Durban</td>
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<tr>
<td>AVBOB</td>
<td>LM Pitt</td>
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Does your child have a disability?

Are they out of school?

Are they on a waiting list for admission into a school?

We want to ensure that our children's rights to an education are realised!

If you answered yes to all three questions, please email Sandy urgently – director@autismsouthafrica.org