

Autism South Africa's Newsletter

- News from the Community -



Head Office:
Sandy Klopper

Welcome to 2019!

I have been very naughty in putting the Newsletter last on my 'to-do' list and reading all the goings-on across the provinces from the A;SA Team I am once again so humbled by the team's passion, enthusiasm and initiative. They really are what makes A;SA a family.

At the beginning of March we moved offices to a slightly bigger space. We are still in the Children's Memorial Institute, but on the 4th Floor. If you would ever like to visit us, you get the lift to the 3rd floor and then follow the signs. We are very grateful to the Children's Disability Training Centre for their donation of telephone lines, furniture and equipment that has made our transition very smooth! TeleMasters have been amazing in making sure that we were up and running with our communications from day 1. We still have all the same contact details which is really convenient! We will really miss being so close to the Els Centre Team as we used to really enjoy sharing

coffee and stories in the passage, but as times change, we need to spread our wings and grow. I am sure this new space will allow us to do just that.

As a part of the space I am so excited that we are going to be managing an Early Intervention Centre for Children with Developmental Disabilities. We will formally open the centre on the 1st April and I am thrilled to be able to offer vital direct services to young children across the City.



Watch our Facebook page and emails for more details!

We have a few very exciting projects seeing realisation this year and I can't wait to share them with you! *Until Next Time!*



Head Office:
Vicky Lamb

We have a "Hands On" approach!

It's been another crazy start to the New Year. We have finally managed to get the new Hands on Autism course up and running. What fun it was training our first group of awesome participants! 5 days of learning and sharing.

Claire and I really enjoyed the diversity in the group. We had speech therapists, occupational therapists, educators and parents, from all over Johannesburg and North West provinces. This course truly is for the entire community, everyone who wants to learn is welcome.

We learned about some new books, and famous people who have autism. Did you know that the previous King of Thailand has a grandson who has autism?

Other than discovering some interesting people on the spectrum, the course went really well, and we covered all sorts of topics, often ending up

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discussion very important aspects of the spectrum that were not included in the course.

I think for many of the participants, the highlight was being able to listen to Emile Gouws. Emile is an autistic adult who currently serves on our board, and who is always very happy to talk to groups of people.

They also really loved "A taste of Makaton" as we taught them a few everyday signs they can use at school, home and workplace.



Thanks to all of you who attended the first course! We are looking forward to the rest of the year, where we are going to do our best to get to the rest of the country!

Below are the dates:

East London: 24-28 June
Windhoek, Namibia: 8-12 July
JHB: 12-16 August
Kimberley: 26-30 August



Port Elizabeth: 30
September - 04 October
Mpumalanga (Venue TBC):
21 - 25 October
North West (Venue TBC):
04 -08 November

We also had our first TAGS group for the year in JHB at Nexus Hub in Randburg. A massive thank you to Cleo and her team at Nexus Hub for always being so accommodating and just amazing at helping us out! Our teens and adults tend to go for their firm favourite game of Concept (it's similar to 30 seconds); but this week, the guys decided to introduce them to a new game called Munchkins, which has a dungeons and dragons feel to it.

I was completely lost, but the teens and adults really seemed to enjoy it! These events are definitely one of my favourites, and seeing the teens and adults interacting in a no pressure environment is just great!

#Embrace Neurodiversity.

We have not yet decided on a date for March, but keep an eye on our Facebook page for any announcements!

If you would like more info on any of our social events or courses, please email me - educator@autismsouthafrica.org!

Looking forward to a year of great adventures with all of you in 2019!

Vicky



Branch News:
Limpopo &
Mpumalanga
Mary Moeketsi

Walking around Limpopo

The first event in the province was the visit to Thabadiphiri primary school on the 04/02 at small village called Matjekele deep in the chieftainship of Ga-Phaahla in Sekhukhune district, this is a very small school. Minimum staff, the principal, Mr Sebesho, teacher Ms Masemola and a volunteer who helps.

The roll of the school is 68 learners, among these learners there is a 6 year old boy who is diagnosed with ASD, this is the reason I together with the officials from Sekhukhune district went to the school.

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Last year we went to convince the school to readmit this learner, after they sent the learner back home because they said they could not cope with him.

The learner is admitted back, we arrived at school with Autism South Africa first aid kit, trained the teacher, volunteer and the parent. The teacher who last year was frustrated, said the introduction to ASD we did was an opener and helped her to understand little boy now showing her how to use the first aid kit, she embraced it and said this will benefit the whole foundation phase.

The teacher says she has now identified some learners in the school who they have been wondering what was wrong with them but they now see that they display the flags for ASD. Parents have been informed they also agree that they need to seek help.

On the 05/02 we had an ASD awareness event at Laerskool Julliam Muller in Groblersdal, also at this school there is a 7 year old boy diagnosed with ASD. The mother called to ask for help because she has been struggling to explain to the school why her son does what he is does.

The ASD awareness was for the whole Groblersdal circuit, it was very good to have people who wanted to learn. Some of the educators said they now understand why some of the learners behave the way they do.

Up and About in Mpumalanga

The first event on 01/02 was to meet with Dr Swart, a paediatrician in private practise, he is doing his Masters in Neuro Developmental Delays, and has also does ADOS diagnosis.

Our discussion was about him doing volunteer work at Middelburg hospital to help with ASD diagnosis, this is good news for the families who have been struggling to have their children assessed at the hospital even though the hospital claimed to have an ASD clinic.

18/02: We had the Mpumalanga Provincial Disability Forum, here provincial NPOs were given the opportunity to present to the forum and we were also asked to talk about the successes if any and challenges. All of us have similar challenges, services for our communities especially education and job placement.

This brought to the conclusion that a delegation must go and see the MEC for education, more so

because we want clarity on the suggested special need school that the DoE of Mpumalanga has for many years been promising to build but even to date we are not sure because the department keeps on moving the goal posts.

19/02: We had a good meeting with Association for Persons with Disabilities (APD), this organisation has opened its doors to partner with Autism SA in the province. This was informed by the number of calls they get from parents who need assistance in issues related to ASD.

20/02: We had a beautiful interaction with parents at Tinstwalo Hospital, working in partnership with the Educational Psychologist Dr Gloria Marse. This was a day of learning though I realised that we need to step back and take the parents through what is ASD, because nearly all the parents still do not understand the condition.

That's all for now, till next month folks.

Mary

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Branch News: Northern Cape

Elfreda
Baartman

Lots of learning in Northern Cape

Hi peeps! It is so great to be back! A lot has happened and the year started with a bang! Remember Austin, the autistic matriculant from Cape Town?



His matric farewell was truly a dream come true last year. Everything went well and he looked so smart in his blue suit, which he wanted. The partner's dress which came all the way from Potchefstroom fitted

like a glove and they both looked perfect!

Back at home in Kimberly, we started with the Autism and bullying program. Last year we gave the teachers training on bullying, this year we started with the grade 7 learners. They will be leaving for high school next year. So we are

preparing them to be able to handle bullying in high school. We also teach them about autism and different disabilities and how to be a BUDDY and not a BULLY.

The Commission of Gender Equality had a stakeholders engagement, where many NGOs were invited, as well as Autism SA NC, and they are planning a community outreach to Greenpoint, to educate the community on Human rights. The outreach will be held just the day before Humans Rights Day, on the 20th March 2019. Autism SA NC will be there to support them and we will have an opportunity to educate the community of Greenpoint about autism as all participating NGOs will put up a gazebo and bring their literature and educational material.



I attended the State of Province address and it was a hectic 3 hour event, yet necessary speech from Honorable Premier Sylvia Lucas. It was a great opportunity to network and make new acquaintances.

On a high note, I will be travelling around the Northern Cape from next week the 25th of February. Doing pre-planned training and visiting parents with autistic kids. Here is a breakdown of where I will be and when:

Danielskuil - 25 February 2019,
Kathu and Kuruman - 26 February 2019,
Upington - 27 February 2019,
Okiep - 28 February 2019

That's all for now peeps! Have a Fabulous last week of February!

Elfreda



Branch News: Kwa Zulu Natal

Rosemary Shezi

Hoping for the best in 2019 in KZN

Greetings in the New Year hoping everyone will have a fruitful year ahead. We rounded up 2018 with big promises for the improvement on the intake of our Autism Spectrum Disorders affected children's school admissions to increase

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this year in our province, hoping this will be visible.

The Chief Director, Inclusive Education and Rural Development has urged parents to ensure that their children in Special Schools are being taught following the CAPS curriculum as is it now compulsory in all schools and the differentiated curriculum has been implemented with learners exiting school with an endorsed GEC certificate equivalent to Grade 9. No more puzzles and play.

To add on that; there is no more compulsory ousting of learners at age 18 without attaining the GEC certificate and or Vocational Skills. Our ASD affected Learners with a comorbidity learning barrier need to be enrolled in the Technical Occupational Skills programme too in Special Schools.

So happy to say that all parents now need to demand homework and parent teacher meetings to view their children's progress at school so that they continue teaching the child at home. A word of warning to our parents and communities, no child is to be removed from a special school to a Care centre without proper consultation! Good News indeed.

Enrolment of our ASD learners has increased in some schools though we still have some hiccups in others with a hope of eradicating all the barriers.

We had a positive entry into the New Year with our Social Development Districts Disability Coordinators and the Provincial Coordinators mapping up programs for the year with a hope of a positive outcome in the end.

Our first Parents Training of recently diagnosed children took place in Pinetown and it was a huge success. A big Thank you goes out to the parents, grandparents, siblings and care givers who attended. Not forgetting to thank Nontando Ngcobo the poet, short story writer and visual Arts champion, who is on the spectrum, for her moving motivational talk to the parents at the end of the training. Well done Mapholoba.

More good news is the addition of another Occupational Therapist (Sensory Integration Trained) in Pinetown, Elsje Rich of Kidscan. A warm welcome to her, and great news indeed for our Autism community.

I would like to convey sincere gratitude to Nurse Ntokozo Dweku of Umlazi U section who acted

quickly and broadcast for people to help identify an 8 year old preverbal boy with Autism who just came into her house and made himself comfortable in her lounge.

Her prompt reaction and asking for help to locate the boy's family. Her swift move helped re unite the boy with his family in Malukazi nearby Umlazi U section. To Mrs Zondi of ReUnion Special School in Isipingo the class teacher, a Big Thank You to her for her swift move in contacting the family when she recognised the photo of her learner. It was a great relief the boy could be safely reunited with his family.

I am hoping for a fruitful year ahead, so keep checking our Facebook page as we get on with plans for our annual World Autism Awareness Day events. For now kindly diarise 13 April for the annual Verulam Autism Awareness Big Float. The year maybe young, but it is financially aging with March being the financial year end.

let us all embrace Neurodiversity.

Rose

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Branch News:
Eastern Cape
Antoinette Bruce-
Alexander

If I had an uncapped bank account!

As a mom of a young adult with Autism, I am reminded every day of our short comings in addressing the challenge of adult care, residential facilities, sheltered employment and skills training for our young people.

I mention again the fact that I am a parent of a child (young adult) with Autism because in my job as the Regional Development Officer I am in contact with parents in a similar situation as I am. It is rather devastating for a parent to find themselves in the position of starting all over again to find the right fit for their precious child leaving a Special School environment at the age of 18.

We fight hard and long battles to get our young children into Centres and Schools where they will receive the correct education and intervention and for a few years we are 'safe' because the child is happy and cared for and

actually progressing either with academic work alone or with assistance or they have been taught skills to assist them with finding sheltered employment or daily living.

But all this is of no use if the young person leaves school at the age of 18 with nowhere to go and nothing to do. In some cases the child was at a boarding school far away from home and then on return to their home after their last year at school, they are completely the responsibility of the parent who have to hire unreliable carers or ask a family member to assist in the daily care of the young person with Autism.

The carer may not have had any training on how to help the young adult cope, the family member may be well meaning but also have no idea what the care of a person with Autism entails, so they may not treat your very vulnerable child well or provide the incorrect care and it may cause the same damage as abuse - neglect.

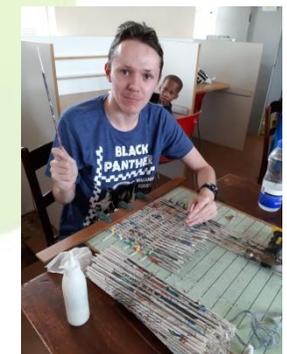
If I had unlimited access to funds, an overflowing bank account, that is what I would do with my money. I would make sure that every province had an Adult Care Residential Facility also offering respite for moms and dads who

would like to just take a break from the 24/7 care of their young adult and have a chance to reconnect, or to just go shopping without wondering if their child may be safe at home.

These centres will be equipped to do skills training, would provide therapy sessions, a nurse, provide nutrition for our fussy eaters - with their own garden to work in - and keep them entertained, engaged and stimulated, both the loners or more social individuals will be happy.

We have very few centres in the Eastern Cape and not all of them are "Autism friendly". In my dealings with the different government departments as part of my work for Autism South Africa, I always raise the question of post-school skills training, employment or homes / centres for our adults.

I get the same response, pulled up shoulders and no answer. Remember one thing, our young adults live normal long lives, I will not be able to look after my son one day when he is part of the "older folks", he will have



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to rely on someone to assist him until the day he dies.

I would love to see him settled in a homely environment, an environment that will be a happy space for him, a place with people who understand him and will let him be the happy, healthy, creative person he is now.

But for this ideal place, I will need money. Lots of money! I want to make sure that he, and all the other young adults who need such a place to go and live in, are cared for. It is true that most schools and centres are started mainly by well meaning, loving and caring parents who want the best for their child, but with the best intentions, but without the necessary funds to do it, it will only be a dream and not go anywhere towards becoming a reality.

I would love to see our government helping us starting and maintaining these homes but reality is that with careful planning and budgeting, it will take years before this is a reality. We also could use a helping hand by our corporates to employ some of our adults who are very capable and can work independently and can be very productive.

Our adults are very precise, they love details, they think logically, they are methodical, they have a fantastic memory and love facts and figures. Most of them are excellent with computers and technology. With a few adjustments made in the environment for them, they can be a very good employee and asset to any company and organisation. Persons with Autism have a lot to contribute to any workforce if they are only given a chance to show you.

Their special interests can be developed into a job skill and because they are interested in the subject / object, they will excel in their jobs.

If I can only get my hands on a fortune! I have so many ideas.

Further in the Eastern Cape, I presented successful Hands on Autism 2 training at Quest School in Port Elizabeth and had a good, lively group attending. After the training, I was sad to hear that one of my participants had a serious motorbike accident and I want to wish Riaan a speedy recovery.

I presented a workshop at Department of Social Development, District Office, East London, with social workers from all districts in the Amatole

District attending. I will have a follow-up workshop with this group in March.

I was also one of the Stakeholders invited to a workshop by Department of Education with MEC, SG, and various officials from DoE attending, but also various stakeholders from all sectors who were invited to input information on the way forward for Education in Eastern Cape but I hope our efforts will also benefit other provinces.

The commissions were centred around four areas / pillars; Capacity Building, Economic Drive, 4th Industrial Revolution and Inclusive Education and Building Social Cohesion. I was 'drafted' into the commission for Inclusive Education as a NGO partner for Autism SA and further into a special forum for the way forward. One thing is clear, a lot of work needs to be done within the education system to address equality, supply and demand differences, service delivery of clean, safe, well equipped and staffed schools for our children. Special attention needs to be paid to the fact that we do not have enough special needs schools and centres in our country. Entry and exit strategies need to be revised and addressed. Our children deserve only the best!

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I am still getting a lot of calls from parents about out of school children, mainly on waiting lists at our special schools, and newly diagnosed children looking for placement. Schools are full, waiting lists are growing with the ever growing need and demand, and placement of children is now a priority. This all happens while new children are diagnosed daily. Parents, if you have a child who are not in a school, but should be, and you have tried everything, you have documents to show where you have applied and who you have communicated with, please do not despair, contact our head office and place your child on our list of out of school learners.

Autism SA wants to know about your child.

What to look out for in the Eastern Cape - upcoming events - Autism Awareness Big

Walk on the East London Esplanade on the 26th April. This is an annual event and well supported



with numbers doubling every year. Everyone is invited, we have asked for participants to wear something blue but our beautiful new Autism Awareness T-Shirts available from Autism SA - 011 484 9909, or info@autismsouthafrica.org may be worn with pleasure. This event is always such a fun day out at the beach.

In the next few months a lot of awareness will be done for Autism Spectrum Disorders, please support our awareness campaigns by taking part in spreading the word about Autism and the good work Autism South Africa does for our community. Team work people!!!

Best wishes from the Eastern Cape until next time.

Antoinette, 072 678 2452, contact me for support and I will do my best to assist.

, Antoinette



Branch News:
Free State

Selinah Jele

Letter from parent to parent

"I would like to applaud you for the efforts that you put to develop and empower yourselves about autism. Let me start by saying. We all want intelligent, healthy, smart and beautiful/handsome children. My question to you is. Who said your child doesn't have all that? If you can change your perception about your child you will realize that he/she has everything a parent needs. How do you see yourself unfortunate, not loved, or cursed? Let me tell you, you are blessed, favoured, because you are the ones to change the mind-set of the world about autism. Some were rejected by in laws, colleagues, husbands, friends and even church members. It is time to forgive them and teach them about autism. As parents with autistic children support, love each other and share your challenges.

Please accept (1HH) that is One Huge Hug from me and try to give it to one soul every day. Starting with our own children!"

Mother, Grandmother and motivational speaker - Rachel Leshoro.



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A very successful workshop in heilbron.

Selinah



Branch News:
North West

Dineo Mosiane

The State Of the Autism Address (S.O.A.A)

And

State of Disability Address (S.O.D.A)

Priority of Autism Spectrum Disorder is still a hot issue for discussion in our province. The state of Disability in general, in our entire country, is an urgent matter for discussion. Are we moving forward or riddled with the illusion of snail pace that we are so used to?

The State Of Disability Address (S.O.D.A); we need such an annual national conference. Let me leave it there and hope to hear thoughts from our readers!!!

Autism Training for Class Assistants -Ngaka Modiri Molema district

We are really hoping this is a start of many such training to come, organised by the DoE. This three day Hands On Autism training was arranged by Department of Human Resource and Utilization Provincial Office.

Thirty five (35) Classroom assistants from the six LSEN schools in the district were present. They truly felt and were empowered with cause content which included: What is ASD?; How to work with me? Understanding Sensory world; Taste of Makaton, Introduction to TEACCH Method and other Communication methods.

What they realized was that most of these strategies will work very well with other learners with Moderate to Severe Intellectual Disabilities. They highlighted the plight of their educators, principals, SGB bodies, left at schools that THEY TOO NEEDED TO ATTEND such a course.

We will continue to market A;SA services to the relevant authorities to get our education professionals trained eventually.



Claire Allen, our national educator supporting Vicky, conducted the training with both patience and passion. Her years of experience shown through even in the smallest of examples.

We ensured that I was present for any Setswana translation required, if needed by any attendee and of course we had our Setswana reading materials for them.

ASD Community talks

Regional Development Officers are told never to miss an opportunity for Autism Awareness. Whether its 5 or 10 or 50 people. Use the opportunity!

We invite the communities, schools, mainstream and LSEN, clinics, kgotla tsa merafe (community

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gatherings), etc to contact us for Autism Awareness across the province!
After our engagement with Chief Jeff Montshioa last year 5 December, I am happy to report that his headsmen (dikgosana) have invited me to spread awareness in different Barolong villages where I picked up cases of children living with Autism, Caregivers with limited or no information and of course a stigma that is still rife against persons living with disabilities. I thank you!

Dineo

Feature Articles	From The Editorial Team
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'Embrace Neurodiversity'

World Autism Awareness Day is 2 April 2019

We know that as the Autism community we are faced with many many challenges, including access to schools, employment, acceptance by the wider community and stigma that faces many of our families. The theme for 2019 acknowledges these challenges, but advocates for embracing our differences. Once we accept and embrace our differences and speak loud and proud about Autism, the quicker South Africa will do the same.

What is Neurodiversity, and why should we embrace it?

Neurodiversity is the idea that people have different brains - they think and process the world differently. Neurodiversity advocates for the idea that being neurodivergent does not mean something bad, and it is also not something good - rather it is just a difference.

Some of the labels we see when talking about neurodiversity might include: ADHD, Autism, Bipolar, Schizophrenia, Dyslexic and Typical. Many autistic activists will advocate for neurodiversity - a world where autism is accepted as a different way of thinking and isn't seen to be a disorder.

Just as we should embrace diversity of race, religion, class and other human attributes, we should also embrace different ways of thinking. It is only through embracing diversity that we can create acceptance, and make the world a better place - having people who think differently in our places of work, and social settings will only benefit all of society.

That is our theme for 2019 April Awareness!

Visit our website for more information and feel free to contact us with any questions. We have a

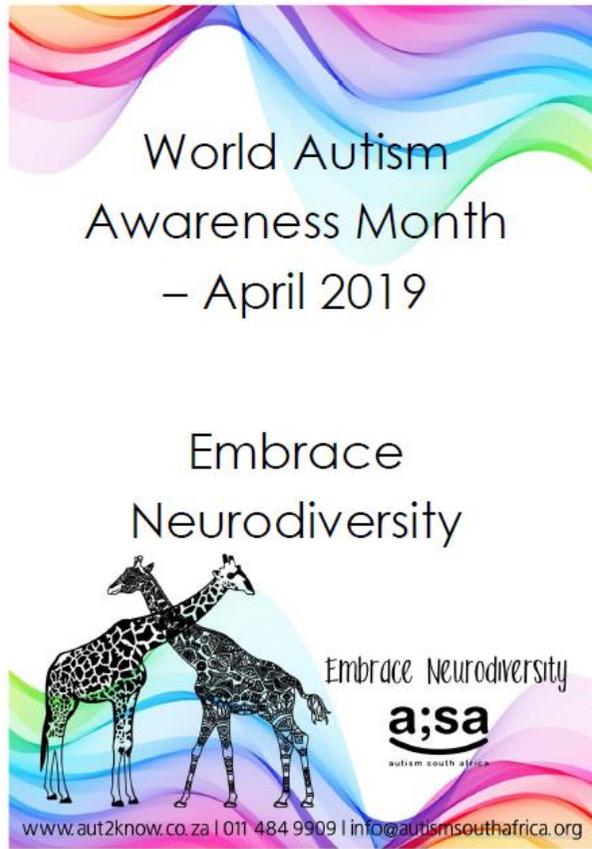
range of merchandise available in-store for fundraising, please do support!

Please email info@autismsouthafrica.org for an order form with prices.



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World Autism Awareness Month
– April 2019

Embrace Neurodiversity



Embrace Neurodiversity
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autism south africa

www.aut2know.co.za | 011 484 9909 | info@autismsouthafrica.org



What will you do for Autism Awareness and Acceptance in April?

- Join us at one of our walks
- Take Our Autism Quiz
- Purchase merchandise to show your support
- Learn about Neurodiversity



Embrace Neurodiversity **a;sa**

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Interesting Events and Dates:



Save the Date

17th March 2019

JOZI 4 AUTISM
a community initiative

Let's Play!

Jozi 4 Autism Zoo Trot

Be There!

R50 per child R80 per adult Under 3s FREE!

Registration: 6:30am Start: 7:30am

www.facebook.com/jozi4autism

www.jozi4autism.org.za

get tickets online @ quicket.co.za

www.bit.ly/QuicketJozi4Autism2019

Yummy Grub | Coffee | Play Activities | Guaranteed Fun For All

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Hope you enjoyed all our news: Next issue
Volume 3 Issue 2 will be out 29th March
2019.

"What is happening in the rest of
S.A?"

Send your news to:
media@autismsouthafrica.org



Volume 3 Issue 1: February 2019

To Share your news please email director@autismsouthafrica.org ||| www.aut2know.co.za ||| Office: 011 484 9909 ||| [fb: AutismSouthAfrica](https://www.facebook.com/AutismSouthAfrica)