



Getting Involved at Harvest High School

Harvest High School is a small, independent mission school that cares for about 200 students from around Ladysmith. These students come from different backgrounds; some from loving, involved, successful families and others from very difficult home situations. Every year we work with a group of students who face specific problems and have very special needs. This year, however, we seem to be working with many more students than before.

A grade 11 girl is in desperate need of support. Her father lives in Ezakheni with his girlfriend, and her mother lives in Harrismith. Although she was living with an aunt, she had to leave when this relationship turned bad. With no where to go, she landed up living with another of our students. Although she was happy here, it didn't work out because her transport cost alone was R500 per month, and her father was unable to pay this. She now lives with the family of one of our past matriculants, but her father is not contributing to food or accommodation and this may become a problem in the future. We strongly feel that her father must support her and take responsibility for her life. However, we are currently giving her lunch at school in order to try to alleviate her situation. You can get involved by praying for her and asking God what he is saying about her situation. It is possible to care for her in a unique and special way, offering her support that she is not getting at the moment. In addition, we need help feeding some of our students and would love to get some help in this area. *There is more information about this towards the end of this letter with ways you can get involved.*

Another family has 3 children at Harvest and is struggling to pay the fees. They sincerely want the best for their children, but are battling to keep up with what we require financially and emotionally. In particular, the one son, who is repeating grade 10, is not coping despite encouragements from us for the parents to place him in a less academic environment or get him ongoing additional support at home. We are concerned that there are physical and developmental issues at play in his life that are barriers to his academic progression. However, the family struggles financially and they do not have the money to have him thoroughly assessed.

Then there is the grade 12 who has been with us since grade 10. Her family situation is very unstable. Her parents are divorced but fight constantly and she is now caught in the middle. She has been sent to live with her grandmother who is trying to keep the peace for this girl's life. However, she has reached the point where she seems on the verge of just giving up – resigned to the fact that this is her lot in life. We desperately need Jesus to intervene in her situation and give her hope for something so much more. This is where caring for her and her future becomes so much more than just speaking nice words. It is totally dependant on a miracle from Jesus. If you feel Him saying anything, please let us know. Currently, we are just a place where she can speak if she wants to and we will be trying to do small things for her to reinforce her uniqueness in the eyes of Jesus.

Another girl in grade 12 lost her father in a car accident earlier this year. She has been with us since grade 8 and we have watched her grow. This is a devastating event in her life and has left her deeply affected. Added to this trauma is the fact that her older step sister manipulates and controls the mother to the point where, other than paying the schools fees, this girl receives nothing. Her matric jacket has been sponsored

by teachers at the school, just a sign of caring for her. She is another case where just being able to buy her something small, or invest in her as a person is very important.

A grade 9 girl is living with her aunt and uncle but is very unhappy. Every week she is in the office in tears and really needs Jesus to rescue her from this situation. As a gesture of care and compassion for her, and in an attempt to show her love, she is receiving a school lunch.

We have at least one boy who is an AIDS orphan who is being cared for by the school. His mother passed away when he was in Grade 7. Then in 2007 his father also passed away. He is now living with his cousin who is about 23 years old. He has been sponsored by the generosity of others, but is also struggling with no one to really care for him. Although academically very competent, he just lacks the motivation. He is also being fed at school to try and help him. When he needs uniform / clothes, we really rely on people around to get involved and help him out.

His older brother also went through Harvest and matriculated in 2008. He is now being helped by the school to do a computer training course in town. However, the course costs R4 800, and we can only give R800. We are trying to get his family to help, but this is not going well. Both boys have become a part of the school and we would love to be able to support them more.

Lastly, we have two children, one in grade 10 and the other who is in grade 8. Both are really dedicated to their work and such lovely students. However, their family situation though is not good. They have an older sister who takes care of them, along with her own two year old baby, the younger brother (who is not in school), another sister who is in grade 10 at another school, and another brother who is in a special needs school. The sister who looks after them all is only 27 years old and hasn't worked since 2006. She also has a seven year old child who lives with the grandmother on a farm in Estcourt. Although, the grade 10's fees are paid by a trust, the sister is trying to pay for the grade 8 alone. They survive on a government grant and sometimes there is very little in the house. They will be getting lunch at school as well, but we may need to build up a supply of food to send home once a month to make sure they are eating. We are also looking for someone to help sponsor the younger ones school fees.

At the moment, Lunch at school is a sandwich with peanut butter or polony on it. This means we go through four loaves of bread a week. We also supply porridge and coffee in the mornings. We would really love to be able to build up stock that we can use to feed these children a nutritional meal. For some it is just the fact that someone is looking out for them and feeding them. For others, it is the only nutritional meal they will get. In addition, we would love to have the money to be able to buy groceries to send on occasion to some of the families just to help them through the month.

These students are just the tip of the ice berg of those we are caring for. There are so many more who come from terrible home situations, but who are surviving; the grade 10 girl, who has a baby about to turn one year old; the boy who is so involved in a gang that getting out by just "choosing" is not an option but who knows God wants his heart. The grade 11 boy who challenges anything about God and is just so angry with the world, but who is one of the most academically gifted children we have in this school. They speak about it seldom and don't want anyone getting involved or trying to help. They rely on themselves, and all we can do is stand on the side and wait until they speak. This is what we pray for and it is amazing when it happens. However, we are then left with the question of how we help them. Some require financial help; for others it is emotional support. If you can get involved in any way, we would really appreciate it.

If you would like to find out more about how you can get involved, please e-mail: care@harvestschools.org.za

For more information, visit the schools website: www.harvestschools.org.za