

## News and events from Autism Connect Learning Centre

### JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2021

Autism Connect Learning Centre aims to function as a learning and resources centre within our community, providing a specialised early learning programme that is Autism specific. Our ethos encompasses neurodiversity and advocacy of inclusion, focusing on early learner intervention.



### **Director's Note**

*Nicolette Ripepi*

Greetings to all our stakeholders, parents and friends of Autism Connect. I would like to acknowledge that by this time we should be recognising one another as family.

We would like to inform you of quite a few changes that are currently underway, namely; policy changes with regards to the overall structure and restructuring of which we will be keeping you abreast of as we go along. Not to keep you too much in the dark, we are looking into what is best for our learners and their wellbeing with regards to their progress and more interaction from parents, educators and professional practitioners alike.

I would like to take the opportunity to give a BIG THANKS and appreciation to our partners, stakeholders and parents, who have assisted us in the upgrading of our centre. It is still a work-in-progress and I am hoping that more assistance will become available to complete a more structural learning environment for our learners. The land project is still underway, and as I am sure that many of us are wishing it gets to fruition, it is still going through the necessary channels as per required processes.

Stay well and keep safe!  
Nicolette

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### Higgeldy Piggeldy visit

AC learners and staff went on a fun-filled excursion at Higgledy Piggledy Animal Farmyard in Ocean View, which is an enclosed and safe environment with friendly staff. Higgeldy Piggeldy is a friendly place where learners learn about all of the fluffy animals and engage with the animals. These include goats, pigs, sheep, ducks, geese, chickens, rabbits, guinea pigs. The rabbits were their favourite animal and the learners were encouraged to pet and feed the animals. They had so much fun! It was a great experience for all and our learners had so much fun! We are looking forward to our next excursion which will be to the Two Oceans Aquarium in November 2021.

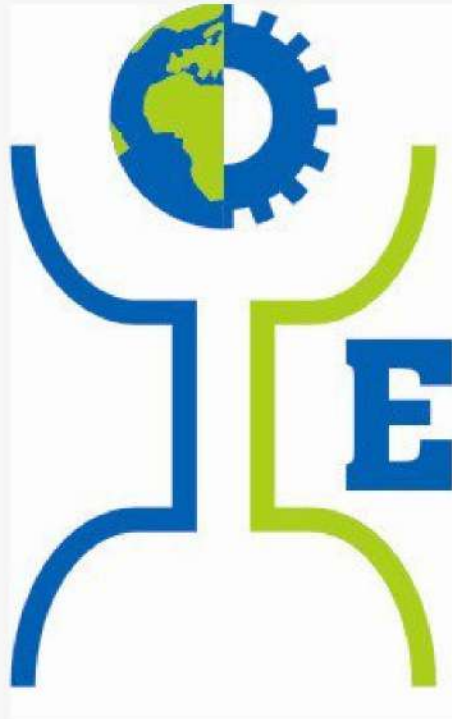


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### Health and safety & Fire-fighting training



Autism Connect staff members successfully completed their annual health and safety & basic fire fighting training. Thank you so much to Chavon from Enviroengineering for facilitating these training sessions.

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### In-service training

Our Monday in-service training was facilitated by Ursula Pietersen (PI) as well as Adea Pillay (Lead Teacher). For this term we focussed on the importance of ISP documents as well as the importance of Sensory Regulations.

#### ISP by Ursula Pietersen.

During this presentation, teachers were taken through what an ISP is for and the importance of the document. The actual document was shown to them and how an ISP document is formulated. A table was set up with ISP documents, various other documents, checklists, and how a record is kept when working on learner's goals in the classroom.



#### Sensory Regulation by Adea Pillay.

The importance of sensory input and self-regulation. A table was also set up on various sensory toys used and how it is used.



#### Seizure in children with Autism and what to do by Ursula Pietersen.

A practical demonstration was done by teachers on what to do during the time of an onset of a seizure. Teachers found this very helpful.



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### **Covid Protocol and regulations from our Covid officers**

On behalf of Adea Pillay and Kym Hagins, our health and safety representatives, we would like to extend our gratitude and appreciation to each and every role player who has made our task easier by playing your part to help keep the centre a clean and safe environment.

I am sure that by now Pandemic Fatigue has taken its toll on all of us and the very last thing we want is to have anxiety regarding our children's health and safety. I can assure you that we implement and follow through with each and every regulation and protocol. We are guided by the SOP that was sent by the Department and our Work Plan Policy. We have sent both the W.P.P and the S.O.P to the parents. Even though we are on Level 1 we still taking precautions here at the centre. I am happy to say that majority of our staff have been vaccinated, another step closer to keeping Autism Connect a safe and healthy place for learning and growth. We have had regular training and refreshers on the Covid-19 protocols and regulations with all staff. Parents please continue to complete and send your child's screening slip each and every morning.

As we head into the fourth and final term for 2021, I would like to encourage everyone to continue to practice all safety measures to ensure that at the end of the year we can have a wonderful holiday break with our loved ones.



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### New Staff

**CLASS TEACHER ASSISTANT:**

**Cleo Baron**

Cleo is currently studying ECD level 5 at Falsebay College. She is doing her internship at Autism Connect which commenced on the 4th of August 2021.

She assists in the Daisy Class which is our school readiness class. Teacher Cleo is such a joy to have at our centre. She is hands on and eager to learn. Welcome Teacher Cleo - we trust that you will have a fruitful experience!



**CLASS TEACHER ASSISTANT:**

**Nyameka**

Also known as Patience, she certainly lives up to her name!

In September 2021 we had Nyameka join us and assist in the Tulip class (Prevocational Skills Class) along with Class Teacher Adea.

Teacher Nyameka has worked before at an ECD and her love for special need children. She has a great passion especially for bigger children on the autism spectrum. She is hands-on and is of great help in the Tulip Class. Welcome, Teacher Nyameka!



**Both Classroom Assistants have settled in well. They are enjoying the training and guidance they are receiving, and are very open to learning. We are very pleased to have them working alongside our dedicated educators. Both assistants go beyond their duty and it is indeed a joy to have them as part of the AC family.**

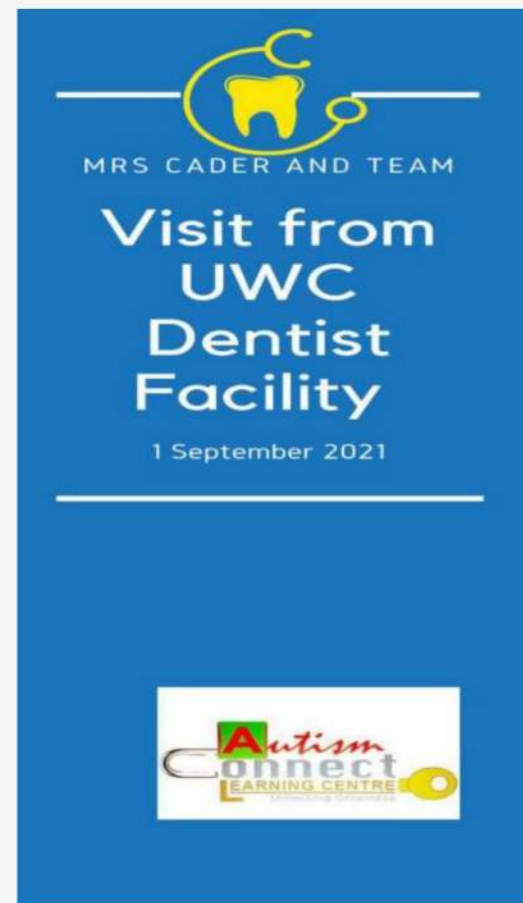
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### Visit from University of Western Cape (UWC) Dental faculty

A visit to the Dentist can be very challenging for children on the autism spectrum. They have difficulty engaging in healthy dental hygiene habits, like brushing and flossing, due to sensory sensitivities. Some may have certain habits, like grinding their teeth, tapping or hitting their mouth and teeth, chewing non-food objects, or eating sugary foods, that can also affect their dental health. We ended the term with a visit from UWC Dentist Faculty. We wish to thank Mrs. Cader and the students from UWC Dentist Faculty who came to the centre and did a presentation for the staff and a fun activity with the learners. The learners had great fun brushing the giant model, looked at pictures on how to brush their teeth. and interacted with the team. Each learner also received a toothbrush and toothpaste to take home.



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### Civvies Days

We started our term with PJ Day, Spring Day, and Heritage Day, which takes place every second Friday. During our Spring day program, learners decorated flower-shaped prebaked biscuits and enjoy delicious cupcakes! They had so much fun decorating their own cookies. On Heritage Day learners and staff got all dressed up in their traditional clothes.



Teacher Teresa and her learners all dressed up in their traditional clothes.



Staff dressed up in their traditional clothes



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### Days to celebrate

On the 18th of July, we celebrated Mandela Day in honour of the late Nelson Mandela, who was born on this day. Autism Connect staff and learners spent 67 minutes of their time with the community of 7de Laan in Strandfontein. Delicious soup and sandwiches were handed out to members of this community.



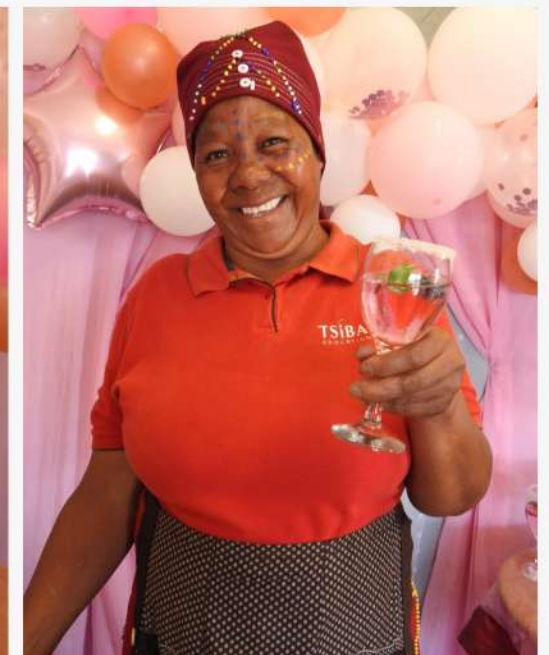
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### Days to celebrate

August in South Africa marks Women's Month, where we pay tribute to the more than 20 000 women who marched to the Union Buildings on the 9th of August 1956 in protest against the extension of Pass Laws to women. This year marks 65 years since the watershed 1956 march to the Union Buildings. As we celebrated women's month, we took some time out to celebrate and acknowledge the phenomenal women at AC. We celebrate these phenomenal teachers who work with your amazing children. The day was made extra special with a photoshoot and a staff lunch which was provided by Management.



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### ART THERAPY WITH KYM



We started the art therapy classes in June and since then we've done activities like balloon stamping, toilet roll flower painting, dinosaur fill-ins, exploring textures, free painting etc. The aim of the first couple of months of starting the classes was to learn on my part on how much the learners are able to do and researching what activities to do to help with the different aspects art therapy works on which could be differentiating what emotions they are feeling, promote fine motor skills, encourage the exploration of textures or messes the learner might not like, the identification of things like faces and their different expressions, a creative and calming outlet etc.

Every learner that attends the classes are more engaged and express excitement when we have classes and don't need that much encouragement to interact when we are doing art with limited hand-over-hand.



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## Update from our Programme Implementer

It has been a very busy and fruitful term in which we planned many exciting programs and activities based on our curriculum in order to stimulate our learners holistically. Our monthly themes such as "The Farm", "Healthy food" and "The Dentist", have been covered in this term. All themes include fun and interactive activities and are sensory-based, which provides learning support for these learners through adapted teaching strategies. Progress has been noted in our learners. No matter how small or big, every milestone is a celebration.



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## THANK YOU!

During this quarter we wish to express our heartfelt thanks and appreciation for the generous support by our wonderful and amazing sponsoring partners:



Thank you for your generous COVID-19 relief donation as part of the annual Mandela Day celebrations.

De Beers Marine for your unwavering support over the past 8 years. With this donation we are able to rebuild and upgrade our current facility.

**DE BEERS**  
GROUP OF COMPANIES



Enviroengineering, as always for supporting and ensuring our staff are trained and our safety structures are in place at the learning centre.



# COMING SOON!!

**Autism Connect is currently undergoing a rebrand and we will reveal our new identity very soon.**

# WATCH THIS SPACE!!