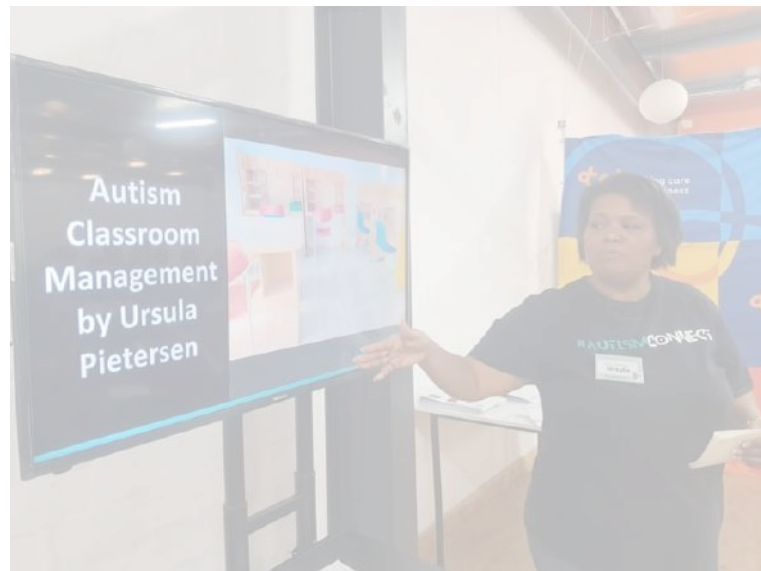




*in*  
**TOUCH**  
Quarterly Newsletter  
LEARNING CENTRE  
April to June 2024



Stay Connected and Informed with 'In Touch,' Autism Connect's Quarterly Newsletter Bringing You the Latest Updates, Insights, and Stories from the Autism Community.



**Thank you for joining us on this journey of connection, awareness, and empowerment within the autism community.**

## Director's Note

Nicolette Ripepi



### Reflections on Term 2

Dear Autism Connect family, friends, and partners

As I reflect on the past term at the Autism Connect Centre, I am filled with a sense of pride and awe at the resilience demonstrated by our community.

From the staff to the students and young individuals we support, everyone has shown remarkable strength and adaptability in the face of a very busy term. We have navigated countless challenges, from new diagnoses to transitioning to new programs, and yet, we have emerged stronger and more united than ever.

Our team has worked tirelessly to provide support, guidance, and care, often going above and beyond to ensure that every individual feels seen, heard, and valued. I am inspired by the determination and perseverance shown by our learners and students, who have faced their unique struggles with courage and grace.

From overcoming anxiety to developing new skills, each small victory is a testament to their resilience and potential.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to everyone for their hard work, dedication, and unwavering commitment to the Autism Connect family.

May we continue to support and uplift each other, celebrating our differences and embracing our unique strengths.

With appreciation and thanks,  
Nicolette

## Programme Implementer's Note

Ursula Pietersen

### Term 2 highlights



Term 2 was an incredibly busy term, marked by significant achievements and growth by our learners and families at Autism Connect. Throughout the term, we continued to provide nurturing and supportive environments for learners.

Weekly therapy sessions were conducted, workshops on communication strategies, and a successful community outreach event where food and clothing were contributed to the community.

Despite the challenges of the terrible flu season, we are so proud of learners who made significant strides in their development over the term. We witnessed notable improvements in communication, social skills, and toileting.

Academic progress was also evident, with increased engagement in learning activities. No matter how slow the progress, at Autism Connect we celebrate all milestones! We extend our gratitude to our dedicated staff and supportive families.

Another highlight was when all learners participated in making of lemonade and lavender bath salts. The aroma of lavender filled the centre while soft calming music played in the background.

We ended the term with an Excursion to Higgledy Piggledy Farm which learners thoroughly enjoyed—looking ahead to Term 3 where we will continue to build upon the success of Term 2.





# TOUCH



## Quarterly Newsletter

LEARNING CENTRE

April to June 2024

Autism  
connect

LEARNING, RESOURCE & ADVOCACY CENTRE

UNLOCKING  
GREATNESS

## World Autism Acceptance Day

1 April 2024

It's a day and month of sharing information on autism acceptance through social media, and preparation for our main event, which is our Colour Run.



## Autism Art exhibition

4 April 2024

Autism Western Cape held their 6th annual arts on a spectrum installation titled "Unity Through Art". Two of our learners' work was showcased. The learners are Tyler (Autism Connect Skills Centre) and Riyaad Smith (Autism Connect Learning Centre). It was a proud moment for Autism Connect as they each received a certificate of participation. We are so proud of them.



## New staff member

8 April 2024

We want to officially welcome Dorothy to the AC Team. We are thrilled to have you join us as an assistant teacher and are looking forward to the knowledge and experience you will bring to our learners. It's great to have you as part of our team! Your passion for teaching and dedication to the learners will make a real difference in their lives. Welcome to our Autism Connect. From Management and Staff 🌻

*Welcome to*  
**THE AC TEAM**



## Our first workshop for 2024

13 April 2024



Autism can have a huge impact on a child's learning experience, affecting their ability to process instruction and develop language and communication skills. When educators are able to understand autism barriers to learning, they can adopt strategies to help their autistic learners to overcome these barriers. The Autism Connect team, in partnership with Grow ECD, hosted a workshop on Autism in the Classroom, covering classroom management strategies and the importance of structure.

We want to thank Grow ECD team for their beautiful venue, training room and refreshments!

Watch this space for more in-person Autism-specific and intervention strategies. This was the 1st for our team, with more coming to you directly.

## Advocating for autistic children and adults

22 April 2024

In recognition of Autism awareness and acceptance month, Nicolette had a number of speaking engagements at various churches and interviews. She shared the personal journey of her beloved son Tyler's autism journey, that birthed Autism Connect, and propelled her to be an advocate for her son in this challenging bumpy path and to ensure that he, and so many others, find their voices and receive equal opportunities.



METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA  
CAPE OF GOODHOPE DISTRICT | TYGERBERG CIRCUIT 120  
NORWOOD SOCIETY

*Autism*  
**AWARENESS SUNDAY**

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Sunday, 21 April 2024  
Norwood Methodist Church  
10:00 AM

**NICOLETTE RIPEPI**  
Founder & Director: Autism Connect Learning Centre and Parent of an autistic son

**REV. MATHEKO MASOLA**  
Methodist Minister  
#autistic preacher

## Autism So What & Autism Connect visit Heart fm

25 April 2024

Nicolette Ripepi from Autism Connect and Carmen Walker from Autism So What visited Heart fm Studios in April. They shared their stories and advocated for autistics and campaigned for S2C letterboard access in Cape Town. Thank you ladies!



## AC Colour Run

27 April 2024



We held our first Colour Run during Autism Awareness and Acceptance Month, and it was wonderful. We deeply appreciate everyone who supported this special event. Thank you to all who braved the cold wind and the sandy patches along Lukannon Drive to walk to Strandfontein Pavilion. Despite the challenges, your participation brought joy to the autism community. Your presence made a difference, and the smiles on their faces said it all. 😊 Thank you!

## Teacher Appreciation Week

6 to 10 May 2024



Teacher Appreciation Week started on 6 May and concluded on 10 May this year. What better time to show our educators that we appreciate them. This year's theme was "Teachers are Shining Stars". Autism Connect wishes to take this opportunity to thank all our educators and class assistants for their hard work and commitment. Keep shining. The seeds you plant today will be the flowers that bloom tomorrow.

## Graduations

17 & 24 May 2024

Autism Connect Staff celebrated the joys and accomplishments of Riyaad along with his family. Riyaad has been with Autism Connect since 2022. Riyaad will be missed. We want to wish him well as he starts his new journey at Beacon LSEN School. Continue to make us proud.



Congratulations to Nkazimlo on his incredible graduation! This milestone reflects his hard work, determination, and the unwavering support from his parents. Their dedication has been crucial to his success. Wishing Nkazimlo all the best as you start at Beacon next week! We believe this is just the start of many more achievements. We will miss you.

## National Child Protection Week

31 May 2024

National Child Protection Week is observed annually to raise awareness of children's rights. Its goal is to protect children from abuse, exploitation, neglect, and all forms of violence, ensuring that the most vulnerable in our society are safeguarded.





## Interactive Parent Meeting

1st June 2024

What an amazing Interactive Parent Meeting. Thank you to all parents who were able to attend. Program started off with an Icebreaker doing the Cha-Cha slide and other fun activity. Important information was shared. The morning ended with brief meeting between Parent and Class Educator. Lastly thank you to all Staff at Autism Connect for setting up and ensure presenters for the day had everything they needed for the morning programme. You are valued! Well done all.



## Higgledy Piggledy Farm Excursion

10 June 2024

It was a beautiful sunny day at Higgledy Piggledy Farm. What an amazing, fun-filled, and energetic day it turned out to be! AC Learners had so much fun exploring, feeding the farm animals, and running around. It was indeed a wonderful time, ending our theme for the month on Farm Animals.





## Dates to diarise


### July 2024

18 July 2024 - Mandela Day
27 July 2024 - Autism Classroom Management (Part 2)

### August 2024

2 August 2024 - Civvies: Masquerade Day
9 August 2024 - Women's Day (centre closed)
29 August 2024 - Arbor Day
30 August 2024 - Civvies: Wacky Day

### September 2024

5 to 11 September 2024 - Bok Day
6 September 2024 - Civvies: Spring Day
10 & 11 September 2024 - Library visits
14 September 2024 - AGM 
25 & 26 September 2024 - Excursion to Playshed
27 September 2024 - Civvies: Culture Day



## Thank You to Parents

On behalf of all at Autism Connect Learning Centre, we would like to say THANK YOU to our parents. Thank you for your ongoing, unwavering and heartfelt support and care you have shown, not only our students, but the organization as a whole. We are appreciative of your efforts and willingness when it comes to the centre and the students. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts and we look forward to many more fruitful and bountiful years.

## Thank You to Sponsors



On the 9th of June 2024, two of our students visited VMS (Vision Medical suite). Tyler and Mohammad received such good care and treatment for their 2-year check-up. Over the years VMS has been delivering healthcare to our autistic individuals. Their service is delivered with dignity and compassion, not only for their clients but for the parents as well. Autism Connect Skills Centre thanks you for your hard work and unwavering dedication to providing healthcare, especially to the learners and students. Keep on delivering such excellence, it is appreciated.

We want to take this opportunity to thank Food Forward for their donations. This has made a positive impact on our Skills and Resource Centre. Our students get to utilize all the supplies that have been donated and this has made a difference. They were able to cook their own food, try new foods and this creates an atmosphere of independence in the kitchen. This donation also allows them to have a healthy meal at lunchtimes especially in winter. Thank you Food Forward.





## Thank You to Sponsors



We would like to show gratitude to the National Lottery Commission for funding us, which helped us achieve our target towards our Project 500 building campaign. With your support and kindness, we were able to make positive changes in our centre. This is highly appreciated,

especially by our students who are aware and thankful to you for playing a role in impacting their lives so that they can experience quality at our centre.



Thank you to Community Chest for the sponsorship and the warm blankets we received for our beneficiaries.



## Support our Building Project



[WWW.AUTISMCONNECT.ORG.ZA/DCNATE](http://WWW.AUTISMCONNECT.ORG.ZA/DCNATE)

Autism Connect needs your financial help. Please support our plan to build a state-of-the-art autism-specific learning facility. Your donations will directly fund the construction, equipment, and staffing needed to make this a reality. Every contribution, no matter the size, makes a huge difference.

**Thank you for your support.**

### Find out more:

-  [autismconnect.org.za](http://autismconnect.org.za)
-  [admin@autismconnect.org.za](mailto:admin@autismconnect.org.za)
-  021 569 7234 Press 1 for Learning Centre

