

June, 2025

LITTLE HEARTS BIG BATTLES

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ABOUT

Heart Kids SA is a Non Profit Organisation founded in 2014 by friends and families of babies that have been born with Congenital Heart Defects (CHD). Heartbeat Chronicles is the newsletter of the network of families and friends which work to educate, support and enhance the lives of children, youth and families living with congenital heart disease. The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the author and not necessarily those of the board of Heart Kids SA. The best sources of medical information are your child's physician and the health care professionals who provide for your child.

OUR MISSION

To educate the public on Congenital Heart Defects and its impact, to lobby and engage private and public institutions as an advocate for CHD awareness and support, whether structural and/or financial. To provide practical, emotional and financial support to families affected by CHD

OUR VISION

Heart Kids SA endeavours to remain the leading advocate and facilitator in Congenital Heart Defects (CHD) awareness and education; and a centre of solace for families affected by CHD



THE BOARD



Dr Andiswa Nzimela



Edward George



Charlotte Lombard

OUR SUPPORT

Emotional Support

- Emotional and Social Support
- Support to expectant parents facing the big challenge when receiving the news that their baby has a CHD
- Help to facilitate counselling.

Practical Support

- Pamphlets
- Hospital Care
- Food Vouchers
- Travel Subsidies

CONTACT

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A mother's journey of

Kwakhanya's Story narrated by Mum Eva

My name is Eva, and I'm the mother of a brave little boy named Kwakhanya, who is now 4 years old. My pregnancy with Kwakhanya was smooth and healthy, though it took place during the difficult COVID-19 period. At seven months pregnant, I contracted COVID and experienced shortness of breath at night, but thankfully I recovered. At eight months, doctors became concerned—Kwakhanya was a big baby, and they suspected he might have diabetes. I also began struggling with high blood pressure. For the first few years of his life, Kwakhanya appeared healthy. But we had frequent hospital visits due to recurring flu, and he was always diagnosed with pneumonia. It wasn't until April 2024—when he was three years old—that we finally received the correct diagnosis: Congenital Heart Disease (CHD). The news was devastating. At the time, I was working far from home and my younger sister was caring for him. When he was admitted to ICU, we learned the pneumonia was actually linked to his heart condition. None of us had ever dealt with anything like this before—we had to quickly educate ourselves about CHD and how to care for a child with such a condition.



Kwakhanya after his CHD operation.

After his diagnosis, we began monthly trips for cardiac check-ups—ECGs, X-rays, and echocardiograms. On July 17, 2024, a specialist from Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital told us that surgery would be necessary. We travelled from East London to Cape Town on September 2, and Kwakhanya had his operation on September 16.

Tragically, just two days later, on September 18, Kwakhanya suffered a cardiac arrest. He lost his ability to speak, move, and respond. It was heartbreaking—he didn't even recognise me. We remained at Red Cross until October 30, before being flown back to East London and admitted straight to Cecilia Makiwane Hospital. Though he could eat on his own, he had to be tube-fed liquids. We were finally discharged on November 12. Coming home was not the joyful return I had imagined. Kwakhanya was not the same—but slowly, he began to show signs of recovery. Today, he can hold a glass with both hands, feed himself, sit in a kiddies' chair, follow instructions, and even stand unsupported for 35 seconds. His speech is slowly returning, though not yet in full sentences. Since his condition changed, I made the difficult decision to leave my job as a palliative caregiver to care for him full-time. I manage his medication schedule, take him to appointments, and help him with his physiotherapy exercises. Just yesterday, his disability grant was approved by SASSA, which brings some relief to our household.

Financially, it's been a very challenging time. My husband is the sole breadwinner, supporting not just me and Kwakhanya, but also our two daughters, aged 17 and 11.

Though the journey has been tough, we remain hopeful and grateful for every bit of progress. Kwakhanya continues to show us what true courage looks like.



Knitting Kindness



A Heart of Gold: Alfreda Rafferty's Gift of Warmth

At 78 years old, Alfreda Rafferty has been knitting for over 15 years, and her passion continues to touch countless lives. A dedicated member of a group of women who have been crafting beanies, booties, jerseys, bed socks, and both knitted and crocheted blankets, Alfreda's work has brought comfort to premature babies at Victoria Hospital for many years.

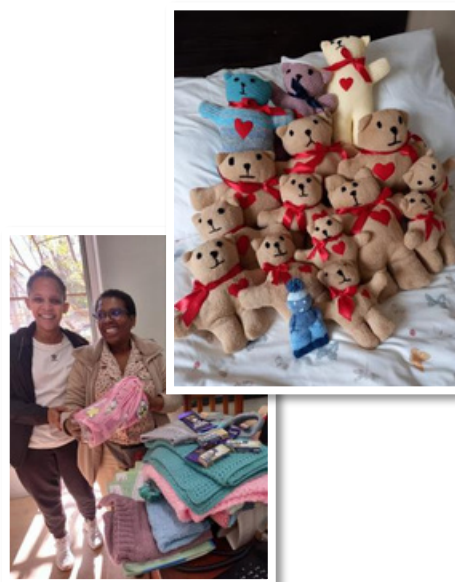
These handmade items were lovingly passed on to a paediatrician at the hospital, who ensured they reached mothers who had gone into early labour—many arriving without clothes for their newborns. For Alfreda, knitting while watching television has become second nature—her hands always busy with a purpose.

Moira, a volunteer with Heart Kids, first met Alfreda at Bible study, where she shared her experiences visiting Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital. She asked for prayer and donations to help provide meals for Mums and children from the Eastern Cape. Without hesitation, Alfreda responded with bags full of beautifully knitted items—and she hasn't stopped giving since.

More recently, she's even started sewing adorable teddy bears, one of which is pictured here. A skilled seamstress, Alfreda also offers clothing alterations—but instead of payment, she asks clients to buy wool. She then uses the yarn to create more handmade gifts for those in need.

Thanks to Alfreda's generosity, we were able to supply Frere Hospital with these precious items during our visit on **20 June 2025**.

May God richly bless Alfreda and all who support her, as together they bring joy and warmth to many hearts.



Thank you . . .

On behalf of the Paediatric Department at Frere Hospital, may I express our deep-felt gratitude to you for the many beautifully knitted or crochet items, including receiving blankets, caps for neonates and clothing items we received for the neonates in our nurseries and infants in our wards. The nursing staff and the mothers were delighted, as the neonates in the nursery could get "capped", especially now that winter is upon us. The caps help protect them, keep them warm (they lose most heat from the head as they have so little fat tissue on their scalps) and allow them to use all their energy to grow, instead of using it to maintain their temperature. The blankets will be given to those mothers who arrive unprepared due to early labour and have virtually nothing for their babies. May I apologise for not knowing the names of the knitters but thank each one of you for taking so much time and expense to donate the lovely garments. They are truly valued. And please ... Keep knitting!

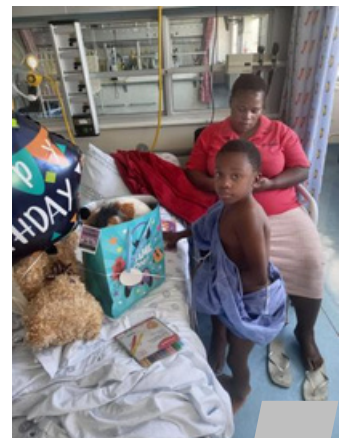
Kim Harper

Dr. Kim Harper, Paediatrician, Head of Department of Paediatrics and Child Health, Frere Hospital.



The Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital

Heart Kids South Africa recently brought smiles and comfort to mothers at The Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital with a special gesture of love and support. Understanding the emotional and physical toll of caring for a child with Congenital Heart Diseases (CHD), the organisation treated these dedicated moms to a heartfelt day filled with kindness and appreciation. The mothers were gifted with beautifully wrapped care packages, enjoyed a delicious lunch, and experienced moments of rest and connection—all made possible through the efforts of Heart Kids SA and their generous supporters. Beyond the gifts and food, the event created a safe and uplifting space for the moms to feel seen, valued, and not alone in their journeys. This initiative reflects Heart Kids SA's ongoing commitment to supporting not only young heart warriors but also the families who stand by them with unwavering love and strength.





5KM

RUN + WALK

A CHD AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

DURBAN

01.02.2025





CAPE TOWN

08.02.2025

5KM

RUN + WALK

A CHD AWARENESS CAMPAIGN





5KM

RUN + WALK

A CHD AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

JHB

22.02.2025



5KM

RUN + WALK

A CHD AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

EAST LONDON

01.03.2025



UPCOMING EVENTS IN 2025

SHOTOKAN KOKUSAI KARATEKA SOUTH AFRICA KARATE FRIENDLY TOURNAMENT

Date:TBA
Venue:TBC

All profits from the karate tournament will be donated to Heart Kids SA.

CAPE TOWN GALA DINNER

Date: 27 September 2025
Venue: Protea Hotel by Marriott- Durbanville

NUTRITION BITES

Whether your kids are back at school, daycare, or hanging at home, it's time to switch gears and eat for the colder seasons! While Summer months are a great time to enjoy the bounty of all that South Africa has to offer.

When you focus on eating seasonally, you are ensuring your family gets the most nutrients from the food you're serving. Produce that's been harvested and eaten within a short time contains the highest level of vitamins, minerals and flavour. When produce hasn't had far to travel, it possibly hasn't been sprayed (produce crossing the border is exposed to sprays and chemicals that aren't good for us), and it is definitely tastier. Sticking to the theme of "eat your rainbow", here are some favourites to consider at your

next meal... Cabbage, winter squash, cauliflower, apples, beets, artichokes, carrots, cucumbers, peppers and potatoes, zucchini, brussels sprouts, and corn just to name a few. Eating fruit and veggies in a host of colours ensures you're getting all the phytonutrients needed for daily diets.



YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

You know the old saying "you are what you eat"? It's actually true! Therefore, take the time to read labels. Know your ingredients and learn where your food comes from, how it was raised, or harvested and how processed is it? Also, have you ever really read what's in some of your family favourites? You may be surprised. Try and avoid things like seed oils (canola, safflower). Healthier options are extra virgin olive oil, or avocado oil and coconut oil. Look for ingredients like high fructose corn syrup and food dyes in your packaged items. These are harmful and should be avoided

whenever possible. A general rule of thumb, whatever your family eats the MOST of on a regular basis, make that the best quality you can afford.

INCLUDING PROTEIN

Making sure you are getting healthy sources of protein with every meal is essential for growth and ensures your body is building muscles. Protein with each meal also helps to curb cravings for junk food. Consider adding eggs, cottage cheese, Greek yogurt, raw almonds and walnuts, lean meats, and fresh, wild fish throughout your day and into your meals and snacks. We rely on protein to get some key nutrients into our diet. These include iron, Omega 3 fatty acids, zinc, calcium and B vitamins.