



**March
2013**

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**Animal care volunteer Estrid Pedersen
looking after her horse, Angie at the SPCA in
Grassy Park**

[EDITOR'S NOTE]

When I joined the Projects Abroad team two weeks ago, I thought I had landed quite an easy-going job. Visit some projects and write a few stories? That shouldn't take me too long.

What I didn't realise was just how much actually goes on at Projects Abroad Cape Town. There is always a new development, an outstanding volunteer or a meaningful event to be documented. The volunteers themselves are full of stories in which they relate their ongoing adventures with enthusiasm and in great detail. And then there are the hundreds of locals who benefit from the hard work of the volunteers and who always have a thing or two to say themselves.

The monthly newsletter which I am tasked with compiling is limited to ten pages. I think it pertinent that I offer a disclaimer at this stage: the contents of the pages to follow are by no means a comprehensive overview of the goings-on at Projects Abroad Cape Town throughout the month of March. If I were to provide that, I would be writing a dissertation on volunteering, tourism, cultural integration and personal fulfilment, to name a few.

Luckily for you I have had to choose the most outstanding updates to feature in the newsletter. I see and hear amazing things every day that I'm on the job, but I have included those that have really stuck with me.

I hope that the stories have the same effect on you, and that they serve to inspire pro-active individuals the world over to continue to help Projects Abroad to make a difference and, in doing so, to learn something themselves along the way.

Thanks for taking the time to catch up!



Meeting some of the Grade 7's at Hyde Park Primary School

[A word from the Human Rights Office]

Poignant Women's Rights Message for Human Rights Volunteers

On Wednesday 27th February, Volunteer Supervisor Miriam Macdonald and four interns - Isabella Stötzel (22) from Germany, Caterina Stanton (20) from Spain, Naja Bruzelius (24) from Denmark and Tania Caballero (29) from the USA - attended a press conference in Wynberg.

The event was chaired by Braam Hanekom, the Director of local non-profit organisation PASSOP (People Against Suffering, Oppression and Poverty) and everyone was there to hear the first-hand account of acid attack survivor 'Susan Forgives' (pseudonym).

Using the platform to speak out against gender-based violence, Susan wanted to tell the full story of events for the first time. Until this day, she had been known to the public only by her pseudonym. At the press conference, she revealed her real name, Perceive Shava, for the first time.

Susan Forgives, a 25-year-old woman from Harare, Zimbabwe, was attacked in August 2011. She had been followed from her place of work in Sea Point and into a taxi bound for Cape Town. It was in Strand Street where a man, disembarking from the taxi, threw acid once into her face, and then proceeded to empty the contents of the bottle over her.

At first she kept asking herself - why me? Why, out of all the women, was she the one to be attacked by a man whom she didn't even know? It didn't make any sense to her. Yet the fact that she was the sole victim of the attack, carried out by people whom she did not know, made her and

others believe that this was not a random assault.

Wednesday's press conference was intended to explain her side of the story: a personal account of events, and how this apparently random attack changed the course of her life.

In August 2011, Perceive was a 23-year-old woman who had moved to Cape Town not long before the incident. She had begun a relationship with a man who became very possessive of her. He would hit her and then deny the fact that this had happened; he would make her swear that they would always be together and that they would die together. Once, he tried to drag her into the ocean for this very purpose. He repeatedly asked her, "I love you, why is it so hard for you to love me?"

As events unfolded, she formed the opinion that the attack was linked to her ex-partner. Perhaps surprisingly, she said that the police were, in this instance, very supportive of her plight.

Perceive has since undergone seven major operations, and faces three more years of reconstructive surgery. Both her upper and lower eyelid on her left eye disintegrated as a direct result of the attack, which left her unable to blink or even to close her eye to sleep. She has had skin grafts taken from her thigh to help with the healing of the damage done to the left-side of her face.

Perceive is an incredibly strong and courageous young woman whose message is that gender-based violence must not be tolerated and must always be reported to the local authorities. Amazingly, it is also a message of forgiveness (hence the pseudonym). She is not speaking out in anger or seeking revenge. Instead, she is sending out a message of solidarity to fellow victims and encouraging them to speak out.

"Is it about how I look on the outside, or who I am inside? Nobody can take that away from me. They can kill the outside, but they cannot kill the inside."

Like many others, Susan/Perceive feels that there is no respect for women in South Africa. The problem, she says, is worldwide. And it's getting worse.

Tania commented that hearing Susan's story was

a deeply moving experience, and one of the highlights of her time at PAHRO. Kate was equally inspired by the bravery of this young woman, and Isabella said that it was very emotional and that she was so impressed by the way in which Perceive spoke out to help other women and how she remains so positive to keep on going.

Perceive feels like she and Susan are two different people and now she wants to concentrate on being Perceive once more. She has sent out a powerful message, and anyone who has heard her speak or read her story cannot help but be inspired by it.

- Miriam Macdonald & Catarina Stanton

The beautiful and brave Perceive Shaba at the PASSOP Press Conference

[Host Family Love]

Elfriede Nijboer (23) from the Netherlands (Human Rights and Surfing Volunteer) spent four months with Projects Abroad in Cape Town and really misses her host family, the Maloneys from Heathfield. She recently sent us an e-mail relaying some of their special moments together:

'Gail is the best host mother ever. When I arrived, she gave me the biggest hug in the world and made me feel so welcome in her home. She told me to enjoy her home as if it were my own. There was only one rule in Gail's home and that was to respect each other at all times.

During my first week I injured my foot whilst surfing so I couldn't really do much. The other volunteers went hiking up Table Mountain while I had to stay at home on crutches. Gail invited me to join her at a family member's birthday party in Mitchell's Plain, and I had such a great time getting to know all the locals. South Africans are so friendly!

One day Gail took me and my roommate all the way to the Cape of Good Hope so that we didn't have to hire an expensive cab or rent a car. We had a great time, took loads of photos and looked at them all together in the movie room that night. She also took us to the food and crafts market at the Old Biscuit Mill one Saturday, as well as to Canal Walk to shop a couple of times! We even enjoyed a dolphin tour together at the Waterfront one weekend. Gail introduced us to Cape Town in the most fun and interesting way.

Once, I left home in a hurry and my room was still a mess. When I came home, Gail and my roommate had cleaned it for me. On my birthday Gail and my host sister Shannon bought me a lovely sweater and scarf for the rest of my time in Africa as I didn't bring much clothing with me and it was becoming quite chilly. Shannon is amazing too. She baked cupcakes for me on the day. On the first day of my surfing project, Shannon took the train to Muizenberg with me so that I knew where to go and how to get around. We used to chat for hours about absolutely everything.

I'll never forget the famous karaoke nights in Heathfield. The whole family comes around, as well as some friends and other volunteers. It is amazing – full of dancing, singing, chatting and laughter. Movie nights were awesome too. Be warned, though – if they tell you it's a nice movie that isn't too scary...they're probably fooling you!

Gail and Shannon's hearts are so big. They have a great sense of humour and there is never a dull moment in their home. I always felt welcome and at home and it really made my time in Cape Town so special. Gail is like a mother to me. I couldn't imagine a better host family. They were amazing. I really want to return to see them again.'



Elfriede (right) and Shannon enjoying a day together at the beach

Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime. – Mark Twain

[FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH]

German care volunteer Florian Streckert tells us about the special project he is currently involved in at his care placement

The Sibanye Garden Project was launched in 2011 by Where Rainbows Meet Training and Development Foundation. Since then, the organisation has put tremendous effort into the constant development of their organic garden. Highlights along the way include last year's harvest as well as various donations from local businesses and governmental bodies.

The project still faces many challenges, though. Making it into a place of professional training, education and skills development and doing this all in a sustainable manner is no mean feat. By seeking private and public fundraisers and organising action days, Where Rainbows Meet tries to keep the project driving forward with as much support as possible.

We are currently busy cleaning up the garden area and preparing the staff's premises to make it a comfortable working place that offers more job opportunities to the community. We are also going to develop an educational garden which goes hand in hand with the after-care program by providing an area in which the children can practise different gardening activities such as seeding and planting.

The overall goal of the project is to provide healthy food, labour and professional skills development opportunities as well as practical education for local children, thus supporting the Vrygrond community in a sustainable manner. – Florian Streckert



Florian and the dedicated Sibanye gardeners presenting their spinach

An inspiring message from Australian care volunteer Rebecca Catt (20)

'I would definitely recommend a Projects Abroad care volunteer program! The only advice I would give to future volunteers would be to do it for longer than a month...I'm coming back for sure!

The most memorable part of the programme for me was being able to immerse myself in a different culture, and to do so with people from all over the world! Each volunteer had a reason to be here - to help others - so it was so easy for us to interact with each other.

I also found learning about the workings of a local crèche to be very helpful.

Living with a host family (the Landsmans) was amazing. I now feel like I have a second family. I also have new friends, a new outlook on life, a new sense of purpose and renewed confidence in myself.

I LOVED IT ALL! EVERY MINUTE OF EVERY DAY!

It has been the best experience of my life.'

[Weekend Fun Snapshots]

The time of their lives...



To all the
to this edition.
appreciate your
and feedback.



contributors
We
hard work