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# HERSCHEL SENIOR SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

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Dear Parents

This week's article is very short, not because not much has happened, but because it has been an exceptionally busy time. When President Ramaphosa returned the country to Lockdown Level 2 last week and we watched the Covid-19 cases rising again, we held our breath and prepared for a recalibration and heightened vigilance. The 'third wave' has been spoken of for some time, and it seems imminent. In this regard we have communicated with you with respect to updated protocols and we have addressed your daughters in assembly, appealing to all for cooperation, thoughtfulness, awareness and contribution to creating and supporting a safe environment.

It is very important that the information we receive with respect to being in direct contact with a Covid-19 positive person is accurate. There has been discrepancy at times, and this makes it difficult for House Directors and for Tracy Rousseau (Deputy Pastoral) to monitor the mandatory 10 days of precautionary isolation, ensuring that the safety protocols are upheld. I would ask that you assist us by applying this ruling consistently. Please note that coming into contact with a secondary contact does not require precautionary self-isolation, unless that secondary contact develops symptoms and/or tests positive, in which case the scenario changes and self-isolation becomes a necessary step.

I am sure that you can appreciate that in a school, it is important that we manage this protocol respectfully and consistently as the last thing we want is an outbreak which sees us having to shut down for a 14-day period.

We are doing everything possible to avoid this scenario and consult regularly with the medical doctors supporting schools in the southern suburbs, as well as with the Department of Health.

Something that has emerged within the Covid-19 upsurge is some worrying behaviour by way of cyber-bullying, shaming, casting judgment and blame. This form of bullying is insidious because it is not seen. It happens on social media platforms, and especially on WhatsApp. I am aware of the upset that this has caused within some grades and would appreciate parental support by way of your reminding your daughters of the negative use of media and the considerable damage it can cause. We often remind the pupils that a good measure of whether something should or shouldn't be said on an online platform is to consider whether one would say what one has to say to a person directly. If not, then why would one say it via an online platform. The assumption that people are to blame for an encounter is totally misplaced and unfair in most cases.

President Ramaphosa spoke of pandemic fatigue in his address last week. This is a term that I have heard more than once this week. It is something we need to bear in mind when we see what we perceive as 'the worst' in a person as opposed to the best! In times such as this, there are good days and bad days for each of us. The third wave approaches and we are learning to live in a pandemic, but we are also tired of the restrictions, the uncertainty and the frustrations that come with a protracted experience. This requires patience.

Appropriately, the theme of Monday's assembly was kindness. It was a powerful reminder of the simplicity of this act and of the profound effect that it has. In times of turbulence and uncertainty, kindness is a poignant reminder of our humanity and our need to connect and to be connected with.

These lines which Carol Alpert (House Director of Rolt and English teacher) shared with us all, will I hope, bring you a sense of peace as the weekend approaches:

*"May I live this day  
Compassionate of heart,  
Clear in word,  
Gracious in awareness,  
Courageous in thought,  
Generous in love." (John O'Donohue)*

Keep warm and safe and enjoy the weekend!

Warm regards

Heather Goedeke  
Head.

## GUEST SPEAKER

We were very fortunate to have Mitchel Hunter come to address the girls and staff on Israel-Palestine.

Mitchel spoke on the battle parallel to the physical battle, which is the way in which taking up positions of solidarity, or pro-Palestine/Israel discursive tussle has migrated online - a new development historically speaking. This would be an unpacking of how the medium is the message; that the language and rhetoric that social media typically traffics in has shaped the emotions and the conceptual frameworks, in ways in which complexity is often collateral damage. E.g. a person may have sound arguments necessary to defend the position that Israel is an apartheid state, but this will not mitigate the way in which, on social media platforms, the language will be experienced as incendiary.

It was wonderful to see the pupils' interest in this topic and their level of engagement with Mitchel.



## OUTREACH INITIATIVES

Owing to Covid, we are very limited with respect to Community Engagement activities. No students from the disadvantaged schools that attend outreach projects can come onto campus. Our Herschel students are really missing the interaction with the students from their partner schools.

This term we launched our year-long *sanitary towel drive*, the aim of which is to raise awareness and combat period poverty within our community. Period poverty continues to manifest as a prevalent issue preventing young women and girls from receiving an education, employment and performing everyday activities. In turn, it is estimated that 30% of girls in South Africa do not attend school while they are menstruating because they cannot afford sanitary products. Therefore, as an all-girls school, in a position where all of us have the 'privilege' to have access to sanitary products each month, we find this cause particularly important within our Herschel community.

Students can bring any type of sanitary products and place them in boxes in the Library. All the products are distributed within our local communities in Cape Town. We are thankful for all the students who have brought in items and we are also excited to partner with Springfield for a 'Hersch-field' challenge in raising 1000 pads!



Going forward, we have several exciting projects happening. This includes our '*Jars of Hope*' Collection which will launch on World Food Safety Day, on the 7th of June. In addition, to honour the importance of Youth Day in South Africa (by acknowledging both its historical significance and highlighting the challenges and needs of our Youth that persist today), we will be putting together *care packs* for the youth organisation 'Where Rainbows Meet.' Thank you to all the students and staff for your continued participation in all our community engagement initiatives! (Gillian van Blerk)

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In the past, Herschel offered after-hour lessons to the Thandokhulu High School Grade 12 students. Several subjects, including mathematics, history, and economics, to name a few, were covered.

As Covid has prevented these students coming onto campus to take part in these classes, Herschel sourced 20 laptops and placed academic content ranging from worksheets, exam papers and instructional videos on the devices so that the students have access to extra help for their examinations. The laptops will be used by the Thandokhulu Grade 12 students. (Sue Stein)

## HERSCHEL CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

Herschel has a number of thriving clubs, where the girls can participate in activities which they enjoy.

One of these is the Herschel Hiking Club. This club has taken on a new lease of life this year as many students needed to get out, stretch their legs and recharge their souls in nature, after being cooped up for much of 2020. There are 93 members, about 35 of them participating actively in meetings and hikes. The aim of the Hiking Club is to improve well-being through exercise, fresh air, time in nature and inspirational adventure documentaries. Students also get to meet other young people with similar interests.

We have done four hikes this year, including a hot February trek up Skeleton Gorge to see the spectacular Disas, a chilly hike up to Chapman's Peak, a mothers and daughters (and a dad) hike in Silvermine Nature Reserve and an 18km hike to Grootkop on Table Mountain. Documentaries have taken us on an explorative muse through the joys of hiking, a climbing trip to Ethiopia, a trek to the top of Kilimanjaro and the first ever ski down Lhotse face in the Himalayas.



We even enjoyed a smoky marshmallow toasting session on the lawn at lunch break and will be teaching some cooking and camping skills later this year before our first 5-day hiking trail in the Tsitsikamma National Park in September. We have plans to do another 2-day Cape Point Trail and a camping trip to the Cedarberg.

*(Jessica Prevost and Wendy Paterson)*



## SHAKESPHERE FESTIVAL



In the words of Shakespeare, '*All the world's a stage, and all men and women are merely players. They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts.*'

This quote from *As You Like It* sums up the experience that the Grade 10 Drama students had at the annual *Shakespeare Schools Festival*. From rehearsals that brought the students closer together to the final performance, every single moment was full of excitement. The Grade 10s were off to the Artscape bright and early, ready for a big day of rehearsals leading up to their final performance. They had the privilege of performing at the Artscape theatre under professional conditions, enjoying the perks of being a professional actor complete with dressing rooms, call times, stage management, lighting and sound and a final performance in front of a paying audience.

The two drama classes took on 30-minute abridged versions of the plays *Much Ado about Nothing* and *King Lear*. *Much Ado*'s cast adapted their play to modern day, in which the turbulent romances and sibling rivalries of the story could play out in a High School setting.



*King Lear*'s costumes made both cast and audiences feel that they were back in the 17th century, watching the intense and tragic events of the play unfold right in front of their eyes. One thing that made the process very challenging was the use of masks and following of Covid-19 safety protocols. Nothing, however, could have dampened the energy and enthusiasm of the keen and talented Grade 10s who extended themselves, learned a lot and thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

*(Sarah McArthur)*



# Sport

Contact sports in schools may have been suspended by the DBE, however *Cross Country*, as a non-contact sport, is thriving, with many of our staff and girls enjoying their weekly run through the suburb of Claremont.



# AFRICA DAY

The Library celebrated African authors in recognition of Africa Day (25 May)



# CAKES TO DIE FOR!

This week, our Grade 10 Consumer Studies learners completed their very first practical cookery assessment under strict examination conditions. Their brief required them to use skills that they had learned in class and recreate a classic Victoria sponge cake recipe by putting their own spin on it.



## HOUSE SYSTEM AND VERTICAL TUTOR: Part three of our series of “Meet the House Team”:

### DEPUTY HOUSE DIRECTOR: JUNIOR PHASE

The Deputy House Director: Junior Phase is responsible for assisting the House Director with House events, as well as looking after the pastoral care and academic concerns for Grades 8 and 9.

## CARTER

### DEPUTY HOUSE DIRECTOR: JUNIOR PHASE – NICOLE HUGHES



**Who am I?** I am originally from East London in the Eastern Cape. I studied in Stellenbosch and after that I went to London to work and travel. I am married to Andrew, who is also a teacher at a boys' school down the road. We have two children, Thomas and Jessica, and two Jack Russell's, Jack and Daisy.

**In my free time I like to:** Spend time with my family at my happy place, Fish Bay in the Eastern Cape, where we spend most of our holidays. Go for walks on the beach, spend time gardening and doing crafts with my kids.

**Fun fact about me:** I enjoy fishing with my husband and sometimes I have more luck catching fish than he does!

**What I love most about being a teacher:** There is never a dull moment. As a teacher I am able to spend each day with vibrant young people and being able to watch them grow, in the few years we teach them, never ceases to amaze me.

**Why I became a House Director:** I wanted to get more involved in the house system, which I am very passionate about. I think it has been a wonderful change from the grade system that we had before, as it builds stronger relationships and house spirit.

**My message to the Carter pupils:** In a world where you can be anything.....be kind!



# JAGGER

## DEPUTY HOUSE DIRECTOR: JUNIOR PHASE – LINDSAY WILLS

**Who am I?** I'm basically a Venn diagram of strong emotions and opinions.

**In my free time I like to:** What is this thing called 'free time'? Just jokes. In my 'free time', I like to curate my deeply hipster-nerd self. This can take the form of making sourdough - I was making sourdough long before lockdown, ok - and cakes with niche flavours, or hunting down second-hand mid-century furniture. I also read a lot - mostly history books, obviously - and spend a disproportionate amount of time scrambling down internet rabbit holes.

**Fun fact about me:** I left school determined to be an actor. Still might try! 😊



**What I love most about being a teacher:** My years of teaching, so far, have taught me that there is literally nothing on earth more extraordinary, thrilling, and hilarious than being on the learning journey with students.

**Why I became a House Director:** See above. But, also, because I have either known powerful, clever and brave women leaders or they have inspired me from history, to get going on this business of making a difference.

**My message to the Jagger pupils:** Listen, I think you're all doing your best. If that's what you need to hear, then I hope it means something to you. Most of us are still figuring things out. When I was at school, someone who was very important and kind to me told me that 'whatever makes you different or weird, that is your strength'. Turns out they were quoting Meryl Streep, which makes it even more brilliant, obviously.



# MERRIMAN

## HOUSE DIRECTOR: DEPUTY HOUSE DIRECTOR: JUNIOR PHASE – ELSABE CAIRNCROSS

**Who am I?** I am Elsabe Cairncross, I am a daughter, sibling, mother, teacher and....and....! Who I am today is the result of many years of influence of those of whom I have chosen to be a part of my life. Through good or bad experiences, I am not the same person today as I was a week ago, simply because life happens. Nor will I be the same next week. But every day I will strive to be the best version of me.



**In my free time I like to:** go on hikes all around Cape Town's beautiful hiking trails, explore the small surrounding towns and enjoying their uniqueness. I like reading and walking/running with my daughter, Kadie, and friends on the long, stretched-out Cape Town beaches

or through the beautiful, peaceful vineyards. I like music and dancing to my own rhythm, albeit to my daughter's embarrassment!

**Fun fact about me:** Ooh, I have none - until Kadie reminded me: Whenever approaching a green traffic light which we think could change at any moment- we both start screaming with one breath until we cross the intersection!

I can tell you; it works most of the time! Our unscientific explanation, might I add is - our screeching, highly irritating screams interfere with the frequency of the robot and delaying it. Try it, next time!

**What I love most about being a teacher...**the holidays 😊 Seriously? I love teaching as I learn from my students as much as I teach them. Being a teacher has its ups and downs, but as a whole it is fulfilling when you help young people to leave school with decent grades and know that they could build on a possible future of further studies. Being a teacher allows me to keep learning and growing in knowledge.

**Why I became a House Director:** I became a Deputy House Director as I love working with young people, encouraging them to give of their best at all times, motivating them when needed and supporting them to achieve the goals easily within their reach. To develop their self-esteem, social skills and ability to cope with stress.

**My message to the Merriman pupils:** *"Today you are you, that is truer than true; There is no one alive who is you-er than you"* \*Dr. Seuss. Always remain true to who you are.



# ROLT

## DEPUTY HOUSE DIRECTOR: JUNIOR PHASE – HEATHER OOSTHUIZEN



**Who am I?** I grew up in Somerset West and studied at Stellenbosch University. I love travelling and I spent the year after I finished my studies teaching English in Istanbul and travelling with friends. It was an amazing experience, but I love South Africa and I was very excited to return home! I am a Christian and this informs everything I do.

**In my free time I like to:** Be outside and in nature. I love outdoor activities like trail running and mountain biking, especially when I can do it with friends and family. I also love reading and learning new things.

**Fun fact about me:** I never thought I would become a teacher! I studied engineering and changed careers after two years of working as an engineer.

**What I love most about being a teacher:** I love the energy and atmosphere in a learning environment. I enjoy witnessing and playing a part in so many young people's lives.

**Why I became a House Director:** It allows for more relationships, including relationships with students I do not teach. It also gives the opportunity for greater participation and involvement in school activities and learners' lives.

**My message to the Rolt pupils:** Live and love abundantly, and do not take yourself too seriously (and spend less time on your cell phones!)

