



HERSCHEL SENIOR SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

No. 5 – 25 March 2022

Dear Parents, students and friends of Herschel

“The rights of every person are diminished when the rights of one person are threatened”.

It was Human Rights Day on Monday, 21 March - a landmark day in South African history. It has its origins in what we know as the Sharpeville Massacre. On this dark day in South African history, 69 people died and 180 were wounded when police fired on a peaceful crowd that had gathered in protest against the Pass laws.

The significance of this day lies in the fact that ordinary people rose as one to proclaim their rights. It is for this reason that 21 March has become an iconic date in our country's history, with Human Rights Day serving as a reminder of the cost at which these rights have come. I read a thought-provoking article yesterday – one written by journalist Saina Shelton (Daily Maverick) titled: Why mark Human Rights Day in a time of human crisis?

In this article Shelton addresses the invidiousness of the notion of “rights” within the current context of South African society, focusing on the void and the absence of basic human rights and of how deeply problematic and disturbing this is. The opening lines establish her opinion: “Our celebration of human rights is a reminder of the connections between human rights, love, beauty and dignity, and the fact that the scourge of hunger and food insecurity, prevalent in South Africa, fundamentally undermines the human right to dignity”.

Hard-hitting words.

I was struck by the realisation that people are fighting to survive – and that in this struggle the idea of ‘rights’ seems very far removed. We mark Human Rights Day with a public holiday and while this might create awareness, it does not alter the lived reality of 1000s of South Africans. In Tuesday's assembly we focused on our individual and collective need to consider the complexity of the idea of commemorating Human Rights Day (on a designated public holiday) precisely because our country, for much of this past century, has not honoured people's right to dignity, freedom and safety, and because currently basic human rights are not a lived reality for millions of South Africans.

There were several interesting responses to be found on Twitter, with the South African Government posting the following message: “Government has encouraged South Africans to reflect on the human rights gains achieved since the advent of democracy and to recommit upholding the rights of all who live in SA.”

An analysis of these gains would enable further commentary, and it is so important that each of us chooses to engage critically and thoughtfully with how information is presented. As I read the Twitter streams on various accounts I became increasingly aware of how we, as readers, are positioned, and of how quickly people move away from facts. Facts are important because they do not change. They are fixed.

As Shelton says: “Once you edit the story the meaning also changes”. For example, historically, 21 March was #SharpevilleMassacre but today it’s called Human Rights Day. The 16th June was the #SowetoUprising, but today it is called Youth Day. We need to carefully consider the impact of moving away from the facts/descriptions and leaving behind/forgetting the events/facts that have given rise to these public holidays. The complexity of many events in South Africa’s past means that it is important that we all acknowledge the loss, pain, trauma and indignity suffered by South Africans and that we remember that *“the rights of every person are diminished when the rights of one person are threatened”*. It is this principle that we need to defend to the hilt.

The end of a significant chapter as a School Head: Lin Heidmann’s departure from Herschel Preparatory School



“One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child”. Carl Jung

In the relatively short time that I have known Lin Heidmann, this is what I have noted, seen and felt in her interactions – not only with students, but also with parents and staff. Lin started at Herschel Prep on 1 April 2006 when she joined from Bergvliet Primary School as a Grade 7 teacher and Deputy Principal.

She worked under Headmistress, Jennifer Court. When the Headship became available in 2007, Lin applied for the position and after an extensive process of identifying and appointing the appropriate person, and owing to Lin’s exceptional leadership ability and experience, she was appointed to the position, effective January 2007. Lin has left a legacy and those of you whose daughters have passed through the Prep school will know what that looks and feels like – with her holistic approach to education delivered so dynamically by the team of teachers she has inspired and led, Lin’s warm-hearted and open-minded approach to learning, growing and flourishing has extended way beyond the classroom and has been felt by many members of the Herschel community. Herschel has been the beneficiary of Lin’s love, commitment, grace and determination and this week we took the opportunity to say a fond farewell to her and to thank her for her incredible service to our school.

My arrival at Herschel in 2020 – the year of Covid – was marked by a number of challenges. I cannot think of a better colleague to have navigated this space and time with – Lin welcomed me warmly and professionally to Herschel and I felt her support from the outset.

I will always be grateful for the time that we have had together as two women working towards change, passionately and purposefully, knowing that our understanding of the concept of duty of care lies at the heart of what we both want for our students, parents and colleagues. I have been enormously appreciative of her leadership skills, her extensive network, her relational expertise, knowledge of policy, uncompromising standards of excellence and for her friendship, kindness and genuine care and support.

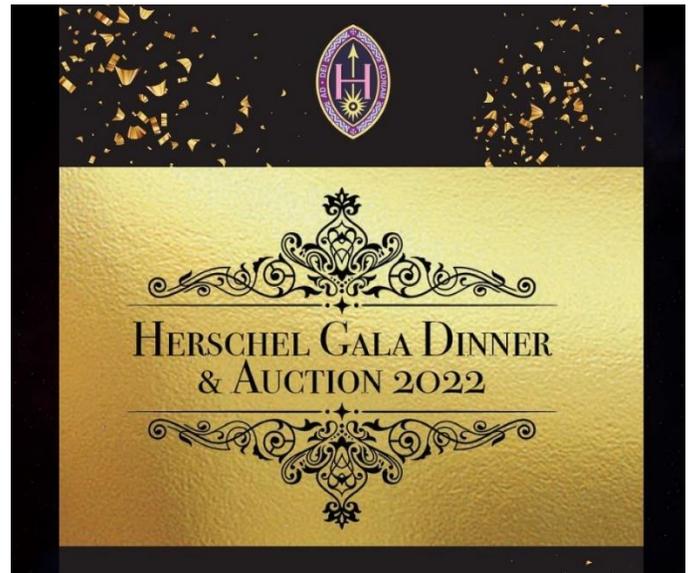
Lin has absolutely lived the tagline *Learning to make a difference* – her holistic ‘Heads, Hands and Heart’ approach to education has laid a strong foundation for growth and change and we will go back to this regularly in assessing our strategy and direction as we move forward.

In learning to make a difference, Lin has also often been the difference – and for that we salute her as a phenomenal teacher, as a woman whose blood is pink, as an inspirational leader, a passionate South African and a loyal friend.

And so to remind Lin a little of the diverse richness she will be leaving behind as she flies to the Netherlands, we greet her with ‘go well, laat dit goed gaan, voerspoed, Hambe KaKuhle, au revoir, sukses met je avontuur!

Lin has left a legacy at Herschel – we know that she will shine in the next chapter of her career in the Netherlands and we will cherish that glow, having felt its warmth here.

Ad Dei Gloriam!



In these challenging times it is always difficult to host fundraising events, especially since we face scrutiny as a well-resourced school. However, the social responsibility that we have towards creating access and opportunity at Herschel is hugely important and I would like to express my sincere gratitude on behalf of Herschel, to all parents who supported this event and who contributed towards the funds raised.

These funds are assigned exclusively to the Bursary Fund and since we have not held this event during Covid times, this is a critical focus as we move forward wanting to support the education of young women at our school and knowing the incredible impact that this has. There is considerable research attesting to the positive impact of educating girls (both on an individual and community level) and when we reflect on the inequity that is the lived experience of the majority of South Africans we should see this as an imperative.

Thank you for the donations, auction bids, support on the evening and your presence in this space – we are deeply appreciative of all individual and collective efforts to ensure that we can continue to support deserving young women to equip, empower and stretch themselves to fit their dreams.

On the cultural front ... *“we are believers!”*

Shrek was a resounding success and we could not have asked for a more relevant, entertaining and uplifting musical. Today we thanked all staff involved in the production. The energy, focus and discipline that has gone into seeing this production being so phenomenally successful is noteworthy and we are hugely appreciative of the vision, talent and collaborative skills that saw this co-production with Bishops sell out! Bravo to the cast and to the directors and crew!



What a rollercoaster this last term has been! This past weekend, we closed *‘Shrek The Musical’*, probably the most ambitious production staged at Herschel, certainly in my time as a Drama teacher. Saying goodbye to a cast, staff and crew that has become family and seeing our beautiful set broken down, sending well-worn costumes to be cleaned and returned to their hangers was very bittersweet. We have come out the other side a little battered and bruised, but stronger and luckier to have been a part of creating something beautiful together.

It really must be said that it takes a village to run a production. *‘Shrek’* would not have been possible without the incredible cast, and the staff who gave so selflessly of themselves and their time. I am especially grateful to my co-creators Rochelle Klassen and Wayne Tucker, whose creative vision, patience, kindness and incredible work ethic made this show possible. Our team is truly indebted to our wonderful cast, and to everyone who lifted a hammer, a paint brush, a glue gun, who ran an errand, sewed a costume, applied stage make-up, put up a sign, drove a student to rehearsal, played a musical instrument, hung a light, balanced a mic, took a photograph, processed an invoice, or any of the other countless ways that people contributed to making *‘Shrek The Musical’* a possibility.

Many people have asked me - ‘Why *‘Shrek’*?’

I was about a year out of high school the year that the very first *‘Shrek’* movie was released. I remember clearly the effect that it had on me. Growing up as something of an alternative kid, the messages of resisting the mould, believing in yourself and staying true to who you are rang true. These characters and their stories appeal to everyone. Indeed, the theme of accepting difference is not just tied to its leads but extends to all creatures in the fairy tale world. *‘Shrek’* is a funny, uplifting and important story, no matter what age you are. It doesn’t condescend to its younger audience and is still so relatable to older theatre goers because of its honesty about the parts of life that are funny, ugly, scary and ultimately joyous.

As a mother of two young daughters, with this classic film on continuous Sunday afternoon rotation, I have a feeling that *‘Shrek’* will be in my life long after the theatre lights have faded. (By Sarah McArthur, Director of Culture)



MATHEMATICS PROGRAMME SELECTION

Congratulations Juliette Roux (Grade 12), on being selected for the Winter Applied Rationality (Mathematics) Programme in Oxford, United Kingdom.

Juliette had to go through a very rigorous process, involving essay-type and tricky questions, an interview, and problem solving some mathematics and logic type questions, in order to be selected for this programme. This programme involves ten days of various talks and activities with only 30 other pupils from across the world.

We are very proud of the courage you have shown to apply for this and in your success of being selected.



Matric Dance 2022

On Friday, 11 March, our Grade 12s got to enjoy their magical Matric Dance. The venue at the Kenilworth Race Course was transformed into a night of 100 stars, representing 100 matric students in Herschel's 100th year.



GRADE 8 CAMP

The Grade 8 camp was hosted at Waterval Lodge in Tulbagh and was a great opportunity for students to get to know each other and bond as a grade.



GRADE 9 CAMP

The Grade 9s were also hosted at Waterval Lodge for their first ever High School camp.

The pupils participated in various adventure and team building activities, the aim of which was to get them active, involved, and most importantly...to have FUN!



STEPOUT

All three Grade 10 groups arrived back safely yesterday after a hugely successful Stepout 2022 and we are enormously grateful to Sandy Rule (Stepout organiser and group leader) and stalwarts Heather Oosthuizen, Carmen Nicholls, Bongani Sopam, Wendy Patterson, Louise van Wyk, Lindsay Wills, Edwin Charikinya, Yaasien Kerbelker and Jeffrey Kanzi who ensured the safety and wellbeing of the Grade 10s as they hiked, cycled and paddled in the beautiful Greyton and MacGregor terrain and Breede Rivier region over 6 days.

My thanks to all staff who assisted with logistics, hosting and support too. I have no doubt that parents will be regaled with stories of hardship and endurance, but having been there for two days of hiking I can personally attest to the wonderful team spirit, grit and determination experienced, as well as an abundance of delicious food, lots of laughter, singing, story-telling and early morning starts! It was special being in the countryside, mask free and with time to think more expansively; especially amidst mountain tops with endless views ... what an incredibly enriching experience and opportunity! *(By Heather Goedeke)*



FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD!

For Single Focus Day, South African chef, food writer and restaurateur Karen Dudley spent a morning with the Grade 10 Design students introducing them to the world of food styling, photography, ingredients, delicious sauces and so much more.



SPORT - We've made a splash!

Herschel Sports Department has enjoyed a very busy and successful 1st term and there have been numerous tours and tournaments across the many disciplines that we offer.

The swimming team won both the PGSGU and A league galas.



Swimming Team

The water polo teams have participated in numerous tours across the country. At the end of January, the 1st team travelled to Kingswood College to take part in the prestigious Brian Baker Tournament, where they came 4th.

On the weekend of 5/6 February the U16B and 2nd team water polo players attended the Alex Road Festival and the U14A team played in the Rhenish Festival. This was a good start to their water polo journey at senior school. They acquitted themselves well and were unbeaten throughout the weekend.

The following weekend the U16A team went to Knysna to play in the Oakhill Festival and the U14A Girls played in the local Dave Pitcairn Tournament hosted by Reddam. They lost to Reddam in an exciting final which ended up in a penalty shootout.

At the end of February, the U15 team went to Crawford College in Johannesburg to play in the Shaun Fuchs Tournament where they won the bronze medal.

That same weekend the 1st team played in the Old Petrians Water Polo Tournament hosted by St Peter's College and we were very proud of them as they won the silver medal, losing to Crawford College in the final.

The water polo season ended with the annual league tournaments for the U14A, U16A, and U19A teams. Our teams acquitted themselves well reaching the finals in all three events. Congratulations to the U16 team who won the Morelli Trophy. Congratulations also to the U14A and U19A teams for bringing home silver medals!



U16 Water Polo Team

Our top 6 squash players travelled to DSG in the Eastern Cape to participate in the Dave Hodgson Festival in February. This was a wonderful opportunity to play schools from around the country.



Squash Team

In this, our centenary year, we hosted the Independent Tennis Festival. 8 Independent schools played in the annual tournament, and we are very proud of our tennis players who won the tournament. Our 1st Senior team also won the PGSGU tournament.



Tennis Team

Basketball at Herschel is one of our most popular summer sports and we have dominated the league in all age groups.



Basketball Teams

We may have experienced two disrupted years on the sporting front as a result of the pandemic, but our sportswomen have come through this looking strong, showing a pleasing competitive spirit and performing exceptionally well. We are incredibly proud of them! I would like to thank Helen Botha and Pam Bowren, as well as all coaching staff, for their passion, commitment and expertise and for the considerable time that they put into ensuring that sport at Herschel is championed!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

My sincere thanks to all members of the Herschel staff for their hard work and commitment this term. It has been inordinately busy, and we have marked the start of this centenary year with pride! Thanks too, to all parents for your support of what we do and for entrusting us with your daughters. Our advocacy for girls education is strengthened through your support and we value this enormously.

Enjoy the holidays with your families and loved ones. It has been a busy, productive, exciting and action-packed term!

Heather Goedeke