

July 5, 2019

REPORT TO SEEKERS CHURCH STEWARDS ON THE OTHANDWENI PROGRAM

Seekers Church and some other donors have provided financial and technical assistance support to the Othandweni Daycare Center in Winterveldt, South Africa for a number of years. The program has three components: a daycare program for preschool children and babies, an afterschool program for middle school age children, and a guesthouse.

For the last few years Seekers has donated \$10,000 annually, which is 20% of our international giving budget. Othandweni is extremely dependent on financial support from Seekers, although the daycare program receives some support from parents' fees and the guesthouse receives fees paid by guests. The afterschool program is subsidized by Seekers and a few other donors, including 8th Day Church and members of the Bokamoso Foundation. About nine years ago Jackie and Dave McMakin spent time on site making improvements to the guest house and training staff, including training in management. Since 2013 Linda Nunes-Schrag and Bill Drehmann have spent innumerable hours providing technical assistance in management and fundraising on site and by telephone and email, with advice from Brenda Seat and Dave Lloyd and support from Roy Barber, Jim Cawley and the McMakins.

With Linda and Bill's continuous mentoring, and additional funds from Roy, the program reestablished and reinvigorated its board of directors, which enabled Othandweni to hire a new manager, Hilda Ramokone, with qualifications, good recommendations, and experience. She has pursued opportunities to expand the programs on firmer financial ground by approaching the department that oversees early childhood education. Her biggest achievement was to register the staff in the labor department and enable them to receive some form of pension scheme when they contribute 1% of their stipends. She also created policies and procedures and implemented personnel management practices. She and the chairman continued to work on obtaining a local health certificate, which will ensure the daycare staff stipends as well as free food for the children. She has pursued grants to operate the bakery, the equipment of which was donated by the St. Andrew's students before her arrival.

However, she and the board have been unable to surmount a number of serious obstacles that have been posed by the original founders on the staff, who lack the qualifications and skills to manage the Center as a whole. although efforts have made to limit their involvement in the day to day operations of Othandweni, they continue to undermine, take legal action and try to extort money they have not earned or are entitled to. After the most recent clash, Ms. Ramokone reached her limit and resigned.

Meanwhile several daycare programs have now been created in Winterveldt by former qualified staff who left the Othandweni program, due in part to the disruptive actions of the founders, and these have drawn away some of the children at Othandweni for whom fees were collected. At the same time, the aftercare program, for which no fees are collected, has attracted greater numbers than before.

In our opinion Seekers Church has provided all the technical assistance we can and we no longer have confidence that the programs will achieve financial stability or surmount the other obstacles, including the disruptive actions of the founders. In addition, Linda and Bill feel their usefulness to the program has ended. Seekers 2019 funds for Othandweni have already been transmitted and we do not intend to seek Seekers financial support for 2020. We will be notifying external donors who have given money to Othandweni of Seekers withdrawal of support and will ask them whether they want their unsent contributions to be sent or be returned.

Linda Nunes-Schrag & Bill Drehmann
Brenda Seat & David Lloyd