



Dear Parents

Laugh a little, and teach your men to laugh... If you can't smile, grin. If you can't grin keep out of the way till you can. It is a crime to despair. Live dangerously; take things as they come; dread naught, all will be well. - *Winston Churchill*

There is much being said in the press about education at present. Today's headlines read: *concerted effort needed to stop producing dunces*. In my opinion it highlights the importance of Independent Schools, like ourselves, to ensure that we set benchmarks which are internationally recognized. We live in a diverse country with many challenges and it is incumbent on us to ensure that we rise to these challenges if we honestly believe that we can make a difference.

It is also easy to get the jitters when one reads other headlines in the news at the moment, but we at Oakhill have the wonderful opportunity of interacting with the future: your sons and daughters, as well as kids from other schools around our province. It allows us to be optimistic and excited about what the future holds. In fact it is invigorating and emotionally draining to keep up with these bright young things that continue to challenge and question the status quo. As adults we tend to lose our youthful exuberance and optimism. Ken Robinson, a well-known educationalist would say we've had the passion for learning sucked out of us. Our young men and women at Oakhill do not need pessimism. They need us as adults to lead them positively into an unknown future. I am reminded of a speech Nick Benedell (Gordon Institute of Business Science) gave some time back, where he mentioned to South African's: it is great if you stay and it is fine if you emigrate - but you can't stay and emigrate. This applies not only to the body but to the mind as well.

I am excited to tell you that Oakhill is certainly not allowing its thinking to emigrate and is making huge strides in ensuring that we help solve our education crises. With the help of Vanessa Eyre, our Bursary and Development Officer, we have been able to partner with the Department of Education to run a three day workshop for Percy Mdala Matric students and I am hoping that this will also be the start of a Saturday school programme which will help these young men and women to ensure that they receive a significant Matric pass.

Oakhill is in the wonderful position of having a 100% Matric pass rate since inception and I am confident that this year will certainly not differ. We have recently completed exams from Grade 7 up and I am delighted with the results I see pouring in. The majority of our school has had the most amazingly successful term and I have found it quite humbling to write reports for each and every pupil. The young men and women of Oakhill are engaged and motivated to do well, and I am confident that the school is in a position to allow their dreams to be realised.

David Cameron, the British Prime Minister, has also recently been talking of the importance of families and particularly fathers in our society and we at Oakhill are blessed with a wonderful community feel. I would like to offer my sincere appreciation to all the fathers who attended the Father's Day breakfast, the Little Oaks Braai and the Father's Day soccer. These occasions were wonderful family celebrations and I am delighted with the magnificent response we had - thank you!

We live in a spectacular part of our beautiful country and it is certainly a privilege to be able to make a contribution to community upliftment and ultimately nation building. It would be wonderful if our school could make a significant impact on the way we think about our country and our countrymen. If we all work together to create a pride in who we are and what we stand for, I have no doubt we will succeed, but ultimately it is down to each and every one of us to ensure that we play our part. If you would like to talk to Vanessa about how you could be a part of this exciting venture please contact her on [development@oakhillschool.co.za](mailto:development@oakhillschool.co.za).

Oakhill Preparatory joined many other schools on a tour to Rietbron in the Karoo to compete in a Festival at the local school there. Many parents tagged along, and I think they would agree that it was an amazing, if not unique, experience. Matthew Williams won the goat counting competition, others enjoyed the horse-riding, parents bid at the local auction for biltong and in between all of this we played a little hockey. It was a wonderful experience and one, which I think, will become an annual event on our calendar.

- **Yearbook 2010**

I am hoping that every family has received a copy of the 2010 yearbook, which is simply a fantastic publication. Thank you to Brenda McKechnie, Sheila Pasio and Julie Stevenson for all the hard work behind the scenes to ensure the unbelievable quality of this book. It certainly reflects the vibrant, colourful, energetic space our young school finds itself in and I have no doubt that this year's will be the same. If you have not yet received a copy I would ask that you pop in to the front office to collect one.

- **Future Projects**

We will be renovating various classrooms this holiday and we will also be completing a new 'state of the art' Science Laboratory which will be used by the entire school. We are committed to ensuring that we continue to provide the best for the young men and women of Oakhill and I am excited about this project and the impact it will have on our teaching and learning.

The School Board has also given the go-ahead for the architect to draw up the first sketches for, what we will be calling, the IMAD Centre. This building will house the new Prep IT Centre, a new facility for Drama, Art and Music in both schools and a state of the art 250-seat theatre and performance facility. This is certainly an exciting project and one which I am sure is going to capture the imagination of many in our community. I, for one, am excited about what it is going to do for the young men and women of Oakhill: it will be a facility where they will be challenged and extended to reach beyond themselves. Knowing the Oakhill kids, I have no doubt that they will utilise it to its full potential. I will hopefully be communicating more detail on this project in August.

We will also be building a new security guard-room over the July holidays to ensure that our property remains secure at all times. Furthermore, we will be doing some landscaping in our College Quad which will make this area friendlier for functions and all the students in the College.

The Little Oaks garden has recently been extended after a long wait for permission from the council, and we will be landscaping this area as the first phase of creating a new interactive garden. Little Oaks parents have done an amazing job at creating a mosaic and this will continue that theme as we seek to create a play-scape which will really interact with kids.

Lastly, we will be refurbishing Barbie's old office which will be converted into our new sanatorium and Rose Solomon will be moving there to tend to all the medical needs of students and staff. This will certainly be a more comfortable space for Rose to deal with bumps, scrapes and medical emergencies and we will have it clearly sign posted for all to see by the start of the new term.

There are many small projects that Philip Stewart and his Grounds and Maintenance team continue to deal with and I am sure you will agree that our gardens and buildings look magnificent at the moment. A huge thank you to Phil and his team for continually beautifying our campus - I know I certainly appreciate it!

- **Good byes**

We said goodbye to Shaw Hipsher this term and unfortunately we will also be saying goodbye to Jannie Biddulph from the start of Term 3. Jannie's partner planned to move to Knysna but unfortunately, because of the difficult economic climate, she is unable to leave her job in Cape Town. We will be allowing him to leave with immediate effect to join her. Jannie has made a significant impact in a short space of time and I thank him for all he has done.

- **Staffing**

Beatrix Hardick will be taking maternity leave from the beginning of Term 3 and we wish her every blessing as she and Herman prepare for the birth of their first child. Beatrix's classes will be covered by a temporary teacher as well as Cheryl Wolf who will be helping out with her Drama classes.

René Korsten, who coaches Hockey at Oakhill at the moment, will also be joining us for a period of time as an assistant in the Grade 1 class until the end of the year. She is a qualified teacher and has been travelling the world and wants to get back into the profession. I have no doubt that you will like her when you meet.

- **PTA**

A new PTA was voted in earlier this year and **Cindy Paggis (Chair)** and her committee: **Susan Kotze (Vice-Chair)**, **Lea Dawkins (Secretary)**, **Bridget Lupton**, **Linzie du Toit**, **Stacey Campbell**, **Gail Sofianos**, **Nathalie Belet**, **Shirley Redman**, **Linda Lifson**, **Debbie Nicoll** and **Jolanda Meyer** have already hosted the most magnificent function. They organised a dinner-dance at Sirocco which was attended by over 100 people and I have no doubt that if this is the benchmark this committee has set, we will be having fantastic fun as a community in the future! Thank you for all you do to raise funds as well as ensuring that we have a lot of fun!

The PTA have just donated a significant amount for the upgrade of the entertainment centre at the school and I would invite you to pop in and see this much-improved facility which will be used for functions, meetings and entertaining other schools on our campus. We certainly appreciate this generous donation - thank you!

I am also excited about a discussion I have had with Jolanda Meyer with regard to establishing a Parent Charter at Oakhill. There are so many issues facing parents today and it would be good to have a discussion forum which would enable parents to discuss and debate parenting issues which are common to all. I have no doubt that Jolanda will enable us to move forward positively in this area.

- **Odyssey**



The Oakhill Odyssey is a 400 kilometer walk, cycle, horseback and paddle over 23 days. This adventure will be done with the current Grade 9's and is not just a physical journey, but a social, emotional and spiritual one as well. Riaan van Straten is our Odyssey Co-ordinator and is planning this wonderful adventure. We have started the countdown for this event and have placed the logo for this facilitation as well as an article about the event on our webpage [www.oakhillschool.co.za](http://www.oakhillschool.co.za). We are wonderfully excited about what this Odyssey holds for us as a community and I would encourage you to read more about this on our webpage.

- **Academic progress**

I am excited about all our academic achievements at Oakhill and it has been an absolute privilege to write reports for your sons and daughters in the last while. I have been in communication with other educationalists around the country who complain about the horrific work ethic of pupils at their schools. I cannot concur with this because at Oakhill, in my opinion, there is a wonderfully positive work ethic. Our pupils have used positive peer

pressure to ensure that we continue to develop young men and women who really care about the work and results they produce. I am the first to admit that not all our students are working to their potential, but it is in this environment that we learn about the joy of learning and I am happy that the majority lead the way here.

These are the results of our top students in the College in rank order. Congratulations to them and I look forward to comparing this term mark with their exam marks at the beginning of Term 3.

#### **Grade 8**

Dean Matter	Outstanding Achievement, 1st in Grade 8
Joshua Carver	Outstanding Achievement, 2nd in Grade 8
Iqraa Daniels	Commendable Achievement, 3rd in Grade 8
Sonia Moodley	Commendable Achievement, 4th in Grade 8
Ciara Mayne	Pass with Distinction, 5th in Grade 8
Luke Mincione	Pass with Distinction
Amy Williams	Pass with Distinction
Bonnie Collins	Pass with Distinction

#### **Grade 9**

Olivia Gardy	Overall Excellence, Outstanding Achievement, 1st in Grade 9
Hannah Laughton	Overall Excellence, Outstanding Achievement, 2nd in Grade 9
Fern Wolf	Overall Excellence, Outstanding Achievement, 3rd in Grade 9
Carmen Micic	Outstanding Achievement, 4th in Grade 9
Rhys van den Handel	Pass with Distinction, 5th in Grade 9
Sean Brodie	Pass with Distinction

#### **Grade 10**

Emily Stephenson	Outstanding Achievement, 1st in Grade 10
Mirren Sharp	Outstanding Achievement, 2nd in Grade 10
Niklas Martin	Commendable Achievement, 3rd in Grade 10
Joshua Pama	Commendable Achievement, 4th in Grade 10
Lulu Read	5th in Grade 10

#### **Grade 11**

Emma Horn	Outstanding Achievement, 1st in Grade 11
Luke Bell	Commendable Achievement, 2nd in Grade 11
Gillian Jones	Pass with Distinction, 3rd in Grade 11
Georgina Ovenstone	Pass with Distinction, 4th in Grade 11
Nicholas Cuthbert	Commendable Achievement, 5th in Grade 11
Rebecca Lamb	Pass with Distinction

#### **Grade 12**

Maren Seydack	Overall Excellence, Outstanding Achievement, 1st in Grade 12
Harry Maarsingh	Overall Excellence, Outstanding Achievement, 2nd in Grade 12
Kate Gardy	Overall Excellence, Outstanding Achievement, 3rd in Grade 12
Carly Seager	Commendable Achievement, 4th in Grade 12
Maricia Schempers	Outstanding Achievement, 5th in Grade 12

- **Finally...**

I started this newsletter referring to many different news articles being written about education and about the state of our nation. There is no doubt that these are difficult times but I am also confident that we will be able to navigate our way through them, if we are all committed to making it work and encourage our young men and women to remain hopeful and focused on finding solutions. Our kids are the leaders of tomorrow and we need to ensure that they feel happy about tackling the problems of the present and the future. With our help, as parents and as a school, I have no doubt that they will make a significant impact in time.

Thank you, once again, for giving us the opportunity to help you as parents to mold and shape the future. Working with your sons and daughters is always a privilege and incredibly humbling. They are bright, energetic, optimistic and innovative thinkers and I, for one, am always learning from them.

Have a wonderful holiday with your family. Enjoy the time spent with your kids, treasure the moments and if you are travelling we wish you every blessing as you experience new things. We look forward to welcoming you back on 26 July!

Kindest regards



**Shane Kidwell**