

VOLUME X
ISSUE X
SPRING
2017

Open Arms news

A LETTER FROM BOBO

Friends,

One of my favorite quotes is from the American poet Walt Whitman: “We were together. I forget the rest.”

The reason I love the quote is that it captures so much of childhood...fuzzy details, forgotten names, recollections of the bits and pieces of events that took place long ago. The quote also captures something more important—fuzzy as the memories may be, we never forget the feeling of being a part of a family, of being together with those who love us no matter what.

At Open Arms, we spend every day trying to create a family for children who have lost their birth parents. This happens in a variety of ways. It starts with a lot of hugs and daily affirmations from our staff and volunteers. It extends to our living arrangements—we have seven cottages where children grow up in small family-sized units with permanent “mamas and tatas.” It means we observe birthdays with vigor, celebrating the existence of every single

child. It dictates that our children have daily chores and responsibilities because that’s an important part of being in a family too. And finally, it means we try to connect children with their Creator, sure that a loving God will be with them through the trials and joys of life.

The ultimate goal of all of these actions is to ensure that every child who comes through our doors *feels* that they are part of a large and loving family. We know that if we can give them that—the support of a real family—then the rest of their lives will be easier. They will have a base of love and support that will sustain them long after they leave Open Arms.

Like most parents, I often lament that the children at Open Arms are growing up too fast. In this edition of *Open Arms News*, you will find information on our older children. Unlike the younger kids, these young adults are thinking about jobs and college, final exams, the big prom dance and dating. Just as I felt with my own children, I often wish we could go back to the toddler years where life was less



INAM, AGE 7

complicated and a simple piggy-back ride often made the day. But that’s not how life goes. People grow up and you hope in your heart that you’ve done your best to prepare your children to take on the world as adults.

If there’s one prayer I have for the children at Open Arms who will eventually leave us, it’s that they will carry around Walt Whitman’s words in their hearts: *We were together. I forget the rest.*

Thank you for giving orphaned children a home. But more importantly, thank you for giving them a family. As the photos in this newsletter reveal, I am convinced that you are doing just that.

With Gratitude,

Bob Ellis



The Heart of Open Arms — the Cottage!

Open Arms promotes a family environment every day. Each child lives in one of our seven cottages with a permanent cottage mother or father (we call them mama's and tata's). Every cottage is known by its exterior color and features bunk beds, bathrooms, a play area and lots of love to go around! Above are some of our cottage staff with the children.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: MAMA ZANDI WITH THE SEVEN BOYS SHE DOTES ON IN THE BLUE HOUSE; TATA AYANDA WITH SIFUNDO, SIPHAMANDLA AND KWAKHANYA IN THE GREEN HOUSE; TATA THEMBEKHILE WITH ONE OF HIS BOYS, ASEKHO; MAMA DORINA LOVES THE SEVEN GIRLS UNDER HER CARE IN THE PURPLE HOUSE



thank you

Davey Nelson Golfers!

Open Arms is the beneficiary of the annual golf tournament put on by our Board member Davey Nelson and the Milwaukee Brewers. The tournament is held at Whistling Straits in Kohler, WI. This year's tournament will be held on June 26. We recently extended our driveway and built a parking garage with proceeds from last year's tournament. Thank you, Davey, the Brewers and everyone who participates!



A NEW PARKING STRUCTURE FOR OUR VEHICLES!



OUR NEW EXTENDED DRIVEWAY ALLOWS FOR US TO PICK UP AND DROP OFF CHILDREN WITHOUT MUDDY CONDITIONS—A VERY GOOD THING!

Great Things

Happening for Our Older Children!



Luthando, 10th grade, heads off for another week at high school. He is a very talented guitar player and takes it everywhere!



Liyema, age 11, was selected to represent the Eastern Cape Province in netball and field hockey competitions. She is the fastest girl at Komga Junior Elementary, a great student, and a top-notch athlete!



Xolelani, grade 10, starred in a recent high school production of *The Diary of Anne Frank*. It was his first acting role and he stole the show!



Zimkhita and **Sikelelwa**, both age 15, earned Certificates of High Achievement at Baysville Vocational HS for their outstanding grades. Both girls are studying computer science as their vocational focus.



Ayabonga, age 19, recently left Open Arms and has a job working in an apprenticeship program at the grocery store chain where we do our shopping. He lives in a house down the hill from Open Arms and is doing quite well. We are very proud of him!



Simnikiwe and **Siyathemba**, brothers who will graduate from high school this year, pose with **Mama Phumeza** before heading off to their Senior Prom. Phumeza is a great cook at Open Arms and is the birth mother of these handsome young men!

Pickleball comes to Open Arms!

The old tennis court at Open Arms has been converted into a pickleball court and the kids are loving the action! Doubles tournaments dominate weekends and weekdays (after home work is completed, of course!). We may have some future pickleball stars on our hands!

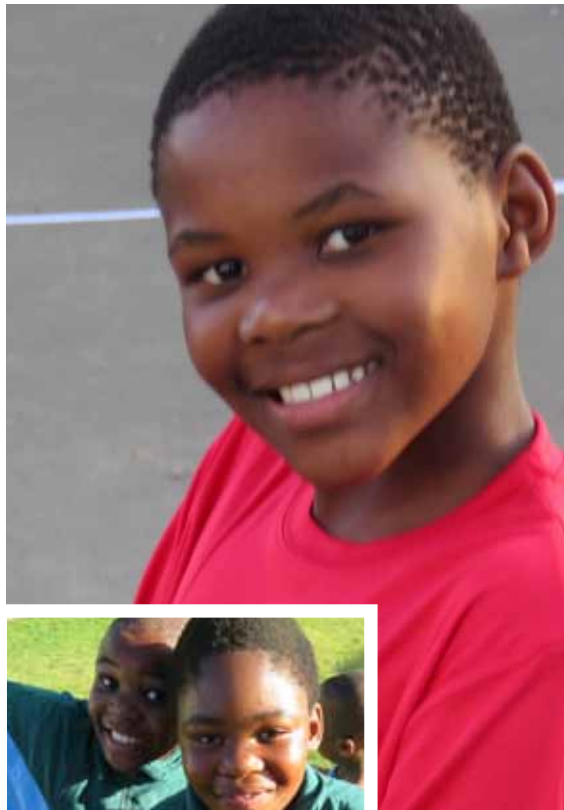
LEFT: SIFUNDO AND ASEKHO CELEBRATE A VICTORY!
RIGHT: PHELISA AND KUNGAWO ON THE COURT!





get to know: Sive

Sive is a spirited and affectionate nine-year-old boy who will turn ten years old on June 25th. He currently is in 4th grade and does well in school. He has spent most of his life at Open Arms and came to us with his younger sister Lindokuhle. He thanks for your giving him a joy-filled life!



SIVE, AGE 9, AND HIS SISTER LINDOKUHLE ARE VERY CLOSE!

NAME

Sive

FAVORITE FOOD

*African Salad
maize + sour milk*

FAVORITE COLOR *blue*

FAVORITE MOVIE *Top*

FAVORITE ACTIVITY

field hockey

WANTS TO BE

a teacher

Thank You Nationals!

Thanks to the Washington Nationals for providing t-shirts to all of the children at Open Arms.



CONTACT INFORMATION

open arms

UNITED STATES

P.O. Box 2198, Litchfield Park, AZ 85340

SOUTH AFRICA

P.O. Box 165, Komga, Eastern Cape 4950

BOARD MEMBERS

Bob Solis, *President*, Phoenix, AZ

Ted Freese, *Treasurer*, Minneapolis, MN

Sallie Solis, Phoenix, AZ

Ann Parsons, Billings, MT

Jeff Towery, Boise, ID

Dave Horan, Minneapolis, MN

Dave Nelson, Sarasota, FL

Steve Slaughter, Chicago, IL

Julie O'Leary, Minneapolis, MN



Open Arms is a 501 (c)(3) organization and any tax deductible donations can be sent to the US address at above.



thank you

Davey Nelson Golfers!

Open Arms is the beneficiary of the annual golf tournament put on by our Board member Davey Nelson and the Milwaukee Brewers. The tournament is held at Whistling Straits in Kohler, WI. This year's tournament will be held on June 26. We recently extended our driveway and built a parking garage with proceeds from last year's tournament. Thank you, Davey, the Brewers and everyone who participates!



A NEW PARKING STRUCTURE FOR OUR VEHICLES!

The Heart of Open Arms — the Cottage!

Open Arms promotes a family environment every day. Each child lives in one of our seven cottages with a permanent cottage mother or father (we call them mama's and tata's). Every cottage is known by its exterior color and features bunk beds, bathrooms, a play area and lots of love to go around! Above are some of our cottage staff with the children.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: MAMA ZANDI WITH THE SEVEN BOYS SHE DOTES ON IN THE BLUE HOUSE; TATA AYANDA WITH SIFUNDO, SIPHAMANDLA AND KWAKHANYA IN THE GREEN HOUSE; TATA THEMBEKHILE WITH ONE OF HIS BOYS, ASEKHO; MAMA DORINA LOVES THE SEVEN GIRLS UNDER HER CARE IN THE PURPLE HOUSE



OUR NEW EXTENDED DRIVEWAY ALLOWS FOR US TO PICK UP AND DROP OFF CHILDREN WITHOUT MUDDY CONDITIONS—A VERY GOOD THING!

Great Things

Happening for Our Older Children!



Luthando, 10th grade, heads off for another week at high school. He is a very talented guitar player and takes it everywhere!



Liyema, age 11, was selected to represent the Eastern Cape Province in netball and field hockey competitions. She is the fastest girl at Komga Junior Elementary, a great student, and a top-notch athlete!



Xolelani, grade 10, starred in a recent high school production of *The Diary of Anne Frank*. It was his first acting role and he stole the show!



Zimkhita and **Sikelelwa**, both age 15, earned Certificates of High Achievement at Baysville Vocational HS for their outstanding grades. Both girls are studying computer science as their vocational focus.



Ayabonga, age 19, recently left Open Arms and has a job working in an apprenticeship program at the grocery store chain where we do our shopping. He lives in a house down the hill from Open Arms and is doing quite well. We are very proud of him!



Simnikiwe and **Siyathemba**, brothers who will graduate from high school this year, pose with **Mama Phumeza** before heading off to their Senior Prom. Phumeza is a great cook at Open Arms and is the birth mother of these handsome young men!

Pickleball comes to Open Arms!

The old tennis court at Open Arms has been converted into a pickleball court and the kids are loving the action! Doubles tournaments dominate weekends and weekdays (after home work is completed, of course!). We may have some future pickleball stars on our hands!

LEFT: SIFUNDO AND ASEKHO CELEBRATE A VICTORY!

RIGHT: PHELISA AND KUNGAWO ON THE COURT!

