



Griffin
McCarthy
Communicating Social Change.

Client brief

Container World is a national company that provides Instant Space Solutions using marine shipping containers, as well as converting containers for various uses, such as office space.

Griffin McCarthy was approached by Container World to document the journey of Project Joy, one of their CSI projects. Container World, in partnership with other stakeholders, were embarking on the building of an Early Childhood Development centre in the Valley of 1000 Hills, in KwaZulu-Natal. Container World restored used shipping containers into classrooms, a kitchen, an office, and a bathroom.

Client deliverables

Over ten weeks, images and a 250 word story, based on interviews and site visits, were presented to the client. These stories were distributed internally to staff, as well as uploaded onto their website.

In addition, social media content was provided for: Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn. The client posted the content throughout the week.

The following document showcases the images and stories of Project Joy.



WELCOME TO PROJECT JOY

Something special is taking place in the Inanda Valley. Share our journey of Joy as we level the playing field in Early Childhood Development.

EST. 1983
Container
World
Continuous Innovation



Journey to joy

As you journey into the Inanda Valley, in-between the houses and dirt roads, a story of transformation is unfolding. A story of how meaningful and intentional change occurs when like-minded individuals, organisations, and companies work together. The result is Project Joy, where the pooling of resources, knowledge, and skills is transforming lives through early childhood development (ECD) education.

It's the story of Bonisiwe Gwala, a woman who started a community creche in 2008 with just three children. Today, Bonisiwe is the principal of Entokozweni Pre-School, which has found a new home in Project Joy. It is a place of learning, fun, safety and love for 37 children in the Inanda community. It is the story of what can happen when a group of people come alongside another, and walk the journey of transformation and growth, with them.

For us, Project Joy is about levelling the playing field, lifting the bar, and creating an environment where all children, regardless of their socio-economic status, can access quality early childhood development education.

We're excited to take you along with us on the journey of transformation. Over the next 10 weeks, we'll be sharing our experiences of collaboration and community engagement in corporate social responsibility initiatives. Sharing why we've chosen to align ourselves with governments prioritisation of early childhood development, and introducing you to Bonisiwe Gwala, a woman who now knows she "can fly" because of this transformation journey.



Building a legacy

The Valley of 1000 Hills is a popular destination on the KwaZulu-Natal tourism route, home to artists and artisans, who showcase their creations in this beautiful setting. However, as you wind your way down the hill through the peri-urban community of KwaNqetho, a very different way of life exists. Taxis negotiate the hill in search of commuters; dodging stubborn cattle that lie across the road and soak up the morning sun. And, although the bell signalling the start of a new school day would have rung more than an hour before, high school children dawdle up the hill, or wait patiently for their transport to fetch them.

Many of these school children are simply travelling the same road that their older siblings and relatives have travelled before them. The destination is uncertain, as the socio-economic challenges they face, will affect their ability to

emerge triumphantly from poverty. For many, poor to non-existent early childhood development (ECD) interventions, will continue to influence their journey in life.

However, hope is not lost. In 2016, Entokozweni Pre-school was identified by a local education NPO, Focus on iThemba, as a candidate for their #powerofthefirstfiveyears project. Container World as a programme partner, are working to create Project Joy, a centre that provides children in the area with the kind of ECD that gives them the best starting point in life.



Leveling the field

Research shows that the first five years of a child's life is critically important for long-term development. By this age, the brain is at its most flexible, and 90% of its capacity has been developed. By five, children are able to absorb and learn more, than at any other time in their life. Just like any other muscle, the brain needs to be exercised for maximum growth, and future learning ability.

So, how do we ensure that children's brains are developed in this critical timeframe? Through intentional and meaningful mental stimulation, good healthcare, love and attention. For children from advantaged communities, early childhood development (ECD) takes place in creche's, pre-primary schools, and in the home. But, for many children in disadvantaged communities, access to good quality ECD, is not a given. ECD does not simply refer to the education a child receives, but includes psycho-social support, language

and cognitive development, as well as mental and physical health. ECD forms a critical foundation for a child's life course, with economists arguing that it is the most powerful investment a country can make. The return on investment is far greater than the initial investment. By investing in the upgrading of Entokozweni Pre-school, and the upskilling of school principal Bonisiwe Gwala, children of the KwaNqetho community will have a fairer chance to develop their brains, so that they too, have a chance for a better future.



Wings to Fly

Meet Bonisiwe Gwala, principal of Entokozweni Pre-School. Like many women in communities such as KwaNqetho, Bonisiwe's reason for opening a pre-school was less about starting a viable business, and more about responding to a community need. Before the idea of a pre-school became a reality, Bonisiwe was volunteering as a homebased care worker in her community. Her role involved visiting people in their homes and sharing important information regarding health and well-being.

It was in 2008 that Bonisiwe opened her pre-school. Her first challenge was to find a good location that would be safe and large enough for the children she anticipated would come. It was her local church that agreed to let Bonisiwe use their hall during the week. But, like all small businesses, the first few months were difficult. Much to her dismay, only three children attended for three months. Then, in July, eleven children arrived and Bonisiwe found herself in need of an assistant. Gogo Pongo joined her, and in the older lady,

Bonisiwe found an encourager and motivator who inspired her to keep pushing forward. By August, the news of the good quality care children received at Entokozweni spread, and the pre-school welcomed 17 children into the church hall.

It was in 2017 that Focus on iThemba came into Bonisiwe's life; offering to assist her with the upgrading of her pre-school, which by this time had 43 children in attendance. For Bonisiwe, this has been an opportunity of a lifetime. A chance for her "to fly!"

The offer didn't just include the construction of a new facility, but also training, support and mentorship (from various collaborators) to ensure that school becomes a sustainable business, registered with the Department of Social Development.





The solution is within

One of the biggest contributors to failed community development projects is not a lack of will, resources or expert knowledge, but a lack of meaningful community participation. Often the community is excluded from the process of making decisions on matters that affect them directly. And, like anyone excluded from decisions that affect them, feelings of anger, resentment, and disinterest are likely to emerge with disastrous results. It's important to remember that the person experiencing the challenge is well positioned to contribute to the solution.

With this in mind, before ground was broken and the first brick laid for Project Joy, strategic and intentional community engagement was entered into. A year prior to the construction of the pre-school, Inkosi Bhengu, the chief of the area, was contacted to discuss whether the community would benefit from an established and well-run early childhood development centre. Once Inkosi Bhengu had

given his blessing, a community meeting was called for the local induna, and any interested parties, to learn more about the upgrade to Entokozweni Pre-School. The site plans were shared, neighbours consulted, and community members hired to assist with the construction of the new school.

The community's support of Project Joy is crucial to its long-term success. It was important that the upgrade to the pre-school be viewed as a win for the community and not just the principal. By engaging meaningfully and respectfully with the community, a relationship of trust and reciprocity has been built, ensuring that children from the community who attend Entokozweni will receive an education that will build a strong foundation for future learning.



The village responds

The proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child”, is commonly used by non-profit and development organisations to describe the importance of their work in the field of education. While some might consider it an overused cliché, its truth is evident in the need for collaborative efforts to address socio-economic and psychological challenges facing children, in many parts of the world.

Like many of the world’s problems, no one person or entity is likely to come up with the solution for it, on their own. Collaboration, which takes into account the various strengths, skills, knowledge and resources of interested parties, is required for real change to take place.

Project Joy is an outstanding example of how collaboration can speed up the process of turning an idea into a reality. In order for Entokozweni Pre-School, its principal and children

to flourish, an holistic approach was required. Over thirty companies, organisations and individuals, are contributing towards making Project Joy a sustainable business that will offer quality education to children, in a safe and beautiful environment. Principal, Bonisiwe Gwala, is receiving early childhood development and management training to guarantee her school is a success, and parents line up to ensure their children get the quality education they deserve. From architects to engineers, nutritionists to electricians, the knowledge, materials, equipment and resources, have been provided to build a centre of excellence for the children of Entokozweni Pre-School.





A mother speaks

We met Goodness Zodwa Welkom at Entokozweni Pre-School. While the concrete floors had been laid, and the last container positioned, work was on hold until the floors were completely dry before the artificial grass could be installed. Goodness has a four-year-old attending Bonisiwe's school. As we walked through the building site, Goodness is bright with expectation at the improved education and facilities her child was going to benefit from, once the doors are officially opened.

Goodness's school experience was vastly different to that of her child's. She spent her formative years in Embo, a rural community on the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal, before moving to Pietermaritzburg where she attended school.

"What was your pre-school like when you were small?" I ask. She smiles shyly. She didn't go to a pre-school; instead, her first school experience was as a six-year-old in Grade One.

Goodness, who speaks English hesitantly herself, tells me with pride that since attending Entokozweni, her child can tell her the names of all twelve months on the year, as well as count, in both English and isiZulu.

"He is much better than me," she beams.

There is great pride in Entokozweni Pre-School, and the current parents have great expectations for further growth. They hope that before their children are ready to leave the school, a Grade R class will be added. The longer their children receive a quality education, the better.



A second chance

Converting old, and often damaged, shipping containers into safe, durable spaces, for children to play and learn in, takes experience. Just as you expect your panel beater to take great care in hammering out that ding in your precious car, we take as much care of the containers bound for ECD centres, such as Project Joy's Entokozweni Pre-School.

We've taken our 36 years in the shipping industry, and applied the intellectual property gained, to restoring containers that become a second home to children between the ages of 1-6. From classrooms to bathrooms, kitchens to sickrooms; each container is retrofitted to serve a specific need in the day of life of a child.

Our history in, and extensive knowledge of, the industry means that our technicians have the skills to work with a rather difficult surface. Fixing the corrugated steel, requires solid experience based on trial and error, and Container World welders have come to understand this

material intimately. Just as we value the containers that move precious cargo across the seas, we value our ECD containers and the precious cargo they hold in the community of KwaNqetho. At our Container World Headquarters in Durban, the containers are repaired, sprayed in vibrant colours, and then fitted with the necessary equipment. Once they are delivered to the site, they are fitted with carpets and all the items needed to turn a container, into a place where meaningful futures are given a chance to grow.



Out with the old

Just like the strong foundation that proper early childhood development (ECD) interventions provide to a child, a solid foundation in good business practices, is essential to the sustainability of a school. Through Project Joy, a holistic approach has been taken to ensure that Principal, Bonisiwe Gwala's school, is a resounding success for generations to come.

Project partner, GROW Educare, provides ECD centres in disadvantaged communities with the support, structure, and resources they need to make an ECD centre, a place of education excellence. They do this through a social franchise model, which gives ownership and develops business women. For Bonisiwe, the monthly meeting of fellow franchisees, provides a much-needed sharing and learning environment. For the first time, she feels supported and empowered, and through implementing what she has learnt, is making the progress she had been longing for.

While the finishing touches take place next door at Project Joy, learning at Entokozweni Pre-School, continues. Bonisiwe

hasn't kept the new teaching methods under wraps until the new classrooms are ready; the walls of the small church hall are covered in new posters and learning materials, and the children are calling out answers in English and isiZulu.

The church hall, which has been Entokozweni's home since 2008, is where children from 0-5 have been learning together. The only toilets available are the adult-sized toilets Bonisiwe's home, and breakfast is made in her kitchen. At Project Joy, each age group will have their own classroom, and the materials and equipment suited to their phase of development. The centre boasts a toilet block with child-sized toilets, a fully equipped kitchen, and a room for when children are sick.

"Are the parents pleased with the new facility?" I ask.

"Ah," she smiles. "They are going to get a huge surprise on Opening Day!"





In with the new

Over the previous nine posts, we've shared the transformation journey of Project Joy and Entokozweni Pre-School, in the Inanda Valley. It has been a journey of growth, collaboration, and hard work. A journey with a specific destination in mind: a place where the children of KwaNqetho, will receive quality early education, during the most important developmental years of their life.

The small creche that operated in an old church hall is now a brightly coloured, beautiful bird, ready to take the children under its wings on their own journey of transformation. Principal, Bonisiwe Gwala, who always had the passion, now also has the skills and resources to pilot this journey, and the ambition to make her school a "five-star school". When people hear the name Entokozweni, Bonisiwe wants them to know that it is the place where quality education lives. It's in schools like this, which are run properly, efficiently, with passion and love, that future leaders are developed. And

educated, compassionate leaders, are exactly what this community, and country, needs.

On August 1st, a community of people brought together by a vision for meaningful change, gathered together under a threatening sky, to celebrate the completion of Project Joy. From community leaders to children, and the many who invested time, expertise, finances, equipment, mentorship and prayers, it was a time to give thanks, and acknowledge the power in collaborative efforts. In the words of Inkosi Bhengu, "We exist together, even though we come from different places. It is our duty to work together and make today better than yesterday."









Produced by



Griffin
McCarthy
Communicating Social Change.

Griffin McCarthy is actively looking for projects that demonstrate intentional social change in South Africa.

Please contact us on:

Email:

Andrew: studio@andrewgriffinphoto.com

Ashling: info@ashlingmccarthy.co.za

Photography: Andrew Griffin

Copy: Ashling McCarthy