

philosophy he started a community committed to providing residential care for children with intellectual disabilities.

The driving principle behind the project was that each child is a perfect spiritual being, deserving of love and respect. While Hitler concentrated on destroying anyone considered antithetical to his concept of genetic purity, König focused on the unique potential in each special needs child, believing that in so doing, he and his colleagues would contribute to creating a new and more humane society.

One day, back in Hermanus, coming

Fortuitously, at just that time in Scotland there lived another visionary, Karl König, a physically disabled Jewish refugee. He had fled Austria just before the systematic decimation of the Jewish population began and was offered a safe haven on Camphill Estate, near Aberdeen. A student of his renowned compatriot, the educationist Rudolf Steiner, he had special empathy for all those rejected by society.

In 1939, together with other students of the Rudolf Steiner

by chance upon an article about Dr König's Rudolf Steiner-based community in Scotland, May Redman was immediately convinced that this was just what her son, Robert needed. And so began a long and fruitful relationship with Dr König. Assisted by friends and family, she managed to buy the run-down Dawn farm in the Valley, perhaps significantly a former leper colony, and scrounged sufficient furniture and utensils to equip the old farmhouse. In 1952, with two pupils and a teacher from Camphill, Scotland, the first Rudolf Steiner School in South Africa was launched. Only a decade later, it had grown to 70 children.



PHOTO: Faylum Meyer

Following the concert on Friday 4 November, Camphill School Hermanus celebrated their 70th anniversary with a dinner at La Vierge in the Hemel-en-Aarde Valley. Camphill would like to thank all their sponsors as well as their guests for attending the event, for supporting them and celebrating this special occasion with them. Enjoying the festivities at the table for teachers and staff were Elvin Philander, Eizette Philander, Johanna Gardiner, Liesl Fourie, Lonel Olivier, Suzette Nortje, Gardian Gardiner and Geraldine May.

In 1978 a separate entity, the Camphill Farm Community for intellectually disabled adults was established adjacent to the School. Although the two communities operate independently, together they carry the flame of hope into the future.

As the Chairman pointed out last Friday, the School has remained true to its founding philosophy throughout its 70-year history, whilst adapting to its South African cultural environment. It currently has an enrolment of 55 learners, ranging from 7 to 18 years of age. And within the framework of the South African special needs curriculum, an individual educational plan is designed for each child in the school.

A wide range of therapies is available to them and strong emphasis is placed on creativity and the arts, including drawing, painting, crafts, drama, puppetry, storytelling, music and movement.

So while there were a number of adult presentations on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary, the day belonged to the children. Chairman Geoffrey Weir, Chahid Jacobs from the Western Cape Education Department, Mike Russell, Regional Director of the Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa, and

former Mayor, Nicolette Johnson – Camphill Hermanus's Patron – all had noble and encouraging things to say about the School, its philosophy and high standard of education, but it was with the children that the guests, including the current Mayor, Deputy Mayor and several councillors, had come to celebrate.

And the children did not disappoint. The full range of creativity was on display in the high-energy concert the staff and volunteers had mounted together with their charges. It was clear that weeks of preparation had gone into it, and the children were in fine form, giving full expression to their energy and joy.

Of course performing takes it out of you, so the ice-cream truck, hot dog stand and juice table were welcome destinations for the stars, while the visitors were shepherded off for the unveiling of the refurbished swimming pool, which is shared by the School and the Farm.

At the end of the day, it was a celebration not only of 70 years of dedicated service to some of the most vulnerable members of our Overstrand community, but of Hope itself. It's my guess May Redman was off somewhere, smiling quietly to herself.