

Camphill School turns 70

Bianca Du Plessis

Love, excitement and a festive air were palpable as the Camphill Community got together recently to celebrate Camphill School's 70th birthday.

Music, singing, dancing and fun – all important components in the learners' education – were some of the key elements of the event.

The school's marimba band played catchy tunes as guests gathered and chatted over coffee and drinks. This was followed by speeches from various guests, including Camphill School board chairperson Geoffrey Weir, Ghalid Jacobs, the Western Cape Education Department's Chief Education Specialist, and Mike Russel, Regional Director of the Independent Schools Association of South Africa (Isasa).

Former Overstrand Mayor Nicolette Johnson, the school's unofficial patron, also delivered a short speech, thanking the staff, from the bus driver who picks up and drops off the children every day, to the teachers, admin staff, management and support staff, for their dedication and commitment.

Overstrand Executive Mayor Dr Annelle Rabie, Deputy Mayor Lindile Ntsabo and Councillor Elnora Gillion also attended the event along with teachers and principals from a number of schools in the area.



Camphill School Hermanus principal Jeanne-Marié Botha, learners, staff and guests were all smiles as they celebrated the school's important milestone. Photos: Bianca Du Plessis

The different phases each gave a short performance, narrated by Michelé Lorton, to illustrate things that are important to the school.

The Foundation Class focused on the importance of a mother while the Intermediate Class sang about the joy the school bus brings them. The seniors sang the ever popular "Do Re Mi" song from *The Sound of Music* before the Vocational Phase learners entertained everyone with the cha-cha slide. They also gave an Eurhythmy performance.

The Camphill community then sang "Khumbaya" and Mashiti before Rev Ken Jackson said a thanksgiving prayer.

There was great excitement when the Foundation Phase learners cut the ribbon to open the newly revamped swimming pools.

Home away from home

Camphill School's history stretches back to 1951, when Mary Redman, mother of a severely intellectually challenged boy named Robert, realised the need for a school for children with special educational needs.

Redman approached Karl König after learning about his work at Camphill in Scotland. He was instrumental in her efforts to establish such a school in



Geoffrey Weir, chairperson of the Camphill School board, gave a brief overview of the international organisation and its objectives.

Hermanus. Her determination and dedication paid off when Camphill School in the Hemel-en-Aarde Valley was officially established in 1952 as an independent special-needs school. Since then it has offered generations of children the opportunity for high-quality education and care.

The worldwide Camphill Movement strongly believes all children, whatever their abilities, carry within their humanity a spark of the divine, and are therefore worthy of love, respect and nurturing.

One of only two small special-needs schools in the vast, largely rural Overberg region, it caters for both day and residential learners aged 5 to 19 years. Pupils receive high-quality, individualised education in small classes and have access to a wide range of therapies, an educational psychologist and a social worker. For them Camphill School is a home away from home.