



Dear Parents

'In the dusk of our lives, we will be judged on our love.'
Goethe

Oakhill is a place of caring, a place of committed people and a place filled with love. The secret of our success is the fact that we have wonderfully talented, warm, emotionally aware staff and Barbie Leibbrandt is certainly our leader in this regard. She is filled with love which she doles out with exuberant passion and her example of caring for others is certainly an example for all in our community and our world.

Barbie is the first person you meet at Oakhill and she embodies all that is good about our wonderful institution. Her example continues to challenge all of us to do more for each other but she is not the only one who cares at Oakhill and I could regale you with many stories of how others have taken up the beat of her drum but I will share just a few.

Our Water Polo sides have recently toured Cape Town and before they had even started to play fixtures, while practicing at a pool at our host school, a chemical explosion disrupted our practice. While no one was seriously injured it was our very own Lwando Bantom who stepped in to ensure that all our young players were safe, he even has the chemical burns to prove it. Thanks Lwando!

Barbara-Ann Hayward is another wonderful example of how we care at Oakhill. I have recently read a letter written to her parents indicating that there would be an Inter-School gala and that all in Grade 1 and 2 would try out for the team. This would obviously mean that some would not be selected and she chose to place a couple of carefully worded guidelines for Parents should this be the case. My children are in this phase and once again I was touched by the forethought and genuine empathy for our young sons and daughters.

Mr Weyers and Mr Cross have recently toured with our Prep School hockey teams and have not only returned with wonderful results but with wonderful compliments as well. I received the most delightful letter from a parent of Kingswood Prep who hosted some of our staff and pupils and they were delighted with the wonderful manners and positive energy of both staff and pupils.

I could continue to regale you with stories which tell of the wonderfully energetic vibrancy of Oakhill but I am also aware that we live in the real world where we often get things wrong. I have recently received a letter from an irate parent who is frustrated with the lack of stock in our School Clothing Shop. I need to apologise and assure you that we are doing our very best to rectify this as we progress forward. We are moving slowly at the moment in this regard, but we want to ensure that we get the best quality and priced items as we continue to offer you this service from the campus shop.

I also received a letter from a parent indicating that they have been disappointed with our lack of communication. We continually endeavor to get this right but I am very aware that sometimes we do not and I want to assure you that this does not mean that we don't care. We continually strive to improve the way we interact with our parent body and I would invite you to email any teacher on the staff should you have a concern. If you feel you would like urgent attention for a specific issue I would ask that you contact James Cross at j.cross@oakhillschool.co.za if it is a Prep school issue or Dawie Botha at d.botha@oakhillschool.co.za if it is a College issue. I am aware that I make mistakes every day and although I do not willingly do so, they still happen. Please know that we really want to interact with you and I would encourage you to be open and honest with us if there is something troubling you.

Lastly I would like to share a wonderful story about Claement Titus, one of our bus drivers, who chose to stop and help one of our Mums change their flat tyre. No one would have noticed if he had slipped by but he chose to make a difference and care and we are immensely proud of him for doing so.

At our staff conference at the beginning of this year we spoke at length about how we could make a difference at every level of our organization. We spoke about ensuring that we were not just cogs in a wheel. Claement has certainly done this and his example certainly urges us all on, in our quest to make a difference.

Our Matrics of 2010 have certainly made a difference in their time at Oakhill and I am proud to announce that we achieved some of our best results ever. We achieved a 100% pass rate (for 17 years running) with a 93% University exemption. Our 29 candidates received 55 distinctions and our SRC President **Matthew Myers** earned a level 7 (80% or above) in seven subjects, closely followed by **Wesley Robinson** and **Matthew Segers with six level 7 achievements**. **Anél Wessels** and **Shivani Moodley** achieved five level 7 achievements.

Although we are proud of our Matric results, it is the interaction I continue to have with Old Oaks which excites me most. I have recently met Lara Maré a young lady who attended Oakhill in the late 90's. She is a bright, self-aware, energetic young lady who has made a significant difference in the world. She studied at the University of Stellenbosch and has a Master's degree in financial management and talks fondly of her time in Peebee's class. She is currently on a sabbatical from Deloitte, while her partner completes his MBA at Oxford in the UK. They have a young boy who is 13 months old and while she was on maternity leave she wrote a well-researched book called Tails and Treats (for 5 - 10 year olds). So, not only do we

celebrate Kevin Evans or Michelle Eray, the sports stars but we can celebrate our own Author, inspired by a project given in Sheila Pasio's class in her grade 9 year.

If you ever doubt that Oakhill does not influence the future you should seek out young women like Lara. She is a breath of fresh air and someone who understands the selflessness of teachers and is humbled by it. It made my day even though I never taught her and it reminded me that we do have a purpose and that we do have influence to nurture those in our care.

The joy of life-long learning was the most valuable gift ever given to me and an independent education, particularly at a school such as Oakhill, encourages the joy of discovering, thinking creatively and being innovative. Every individual counts at Oakhill and our mission dictates that we facilitate every child; finding that place where their passion and talent meets. Oakhill believes every young man and woman who passes through our doors has the potential to achieve greatness and our job entails figuring out how to unwrap that in each individual.

- **Good byes**

We will be saying goodbye to Shaw Hipsher next term. Shaw has made a significant difference in our community since she arrived and her love for community work is what she will be remembered for despite the fact that she worked in the sport department. She has brought a positive energy and efficiency to our communication and her organized ways will definitely be missed. Shaw is returning to the USA and we wish her every blessing as she embarks on this new phase of her journey.

I am also saying good bye to Barbara Finch, who has stepped into my office to help as my PA and has made a significant difference to the way we do things around here. I have no doubt that she will be joining us again in the future and thank her for all she has done to run my hectic office.

We also say goodbye to a number of families who will be relocating and I would like to wish them every blessing as they embark on this next phase of their journeys.

- **Staffing**

We will be replacing Shaw with a newly created position which will enable us to focus on strategic issues in the Sport Department in the coming months. Oakhill sport has grown significantly in the last while and whilst we want to continue to compete against schools in our own area, we need to find like-minded institutions to compete against as we continue to grow and develop. As a result we have appointed Jannie Biddulph, who has recently returned from Dubai but was the Director of Sport at Pretoria Boys High in the 90's. Jannie has vast experience as a coach (John Smit, our Springbok captain, learnt his trade under Jannie's guidance) and administrator and I have no doubt will continue to help us develop and build a school of significance in Knysna.

We have also appointed a full-time Headmaster's PA and we will welcome Lizanne Hafner to Oakhill at the beginning of Term 2. She brings with her a unique set of skills which will help us

to continue building a strategy for Marketing and Admissions along-side Barbie Leibbrandt and she will manage our webpage and electronic communication as well.

Leanna Dreyer will also be joining us as our new Drama teacher in the College. Leanna has some wonderful experience in the Drama profession as a script writer, actress and singer and furthermore she has taught at schools in Cape Town as well. I have no doubt that she will continue to build on the solid foundation created by Jaci de Villiers.

Lastly, we have appointed Riaan van Straten, a young man with experience in adventure racing to head up a team to plan and bring to fruition the Oakhill Odyssey. This concept entails Grade 10's hiking, cycling, paddling, and horse-backing for 20 odd days. It is a social, emotional, spiritual, and physical journey which will allow our young men and women to grow in stature, self-awareness and confidence. We will be interacting with you in the near future to facilitate conversations regarding this facilitation but we are excited to have Riaan join the staff team at Oakhill.

We have also realised that we need to offer a better service and facility when it comes to catering for your sons and daughters medical needs and we will be relocating Rose Solomon to a new venue to head up our new sanatorium. Rose has already started doing this in her office space at Little Oaks, but has done such an outstanding job that we have realised that we need to offer a more professional service. Rose is registered with the HSPCSA and I have no doubt will continue to provide an invaluable service to our community in this capacity.

Barbie Leibbrandt will also be moving offices. She is going to be working more closely with my office and as a result we would like to have her located in the same administration block. Barbie will move into the current Boardroom and we will be moving this facility to another building.

We have also appointed Vanessa Eyre as our Bursary and Development officer and if you would like to contact her you can do so on: development@oakhillschool.co.za. Vanessa is already making a significant difference in this role and I have no doubt that her good work will continue to ensure the sustainability of our young school.

- **Miranda and the Magic Sponge**

If you had attended the Preparatory School Intermediate Phase play “Miranda and the Magic Sponge’ you will agree with me that it was a magnificent production. Beatrix Hardick had to direct and act, at the last minute, when Louis Maarsingh underwent an appendectomy and who can forget Tyrone Minnie’s cameo role. There is no doubt that wonderful event was a learning curve for all concerned. A special word of thanks also needs to go to George Potgieter and Cheryl Wolf who helped Beatrix put this together. These words, penned by a parent, sum up the success of this event: *I am not sure of the drama teacher’s name, but I have a very observant comment made (by my son) which you must please pass on to her. ‘Mom, did you notice that in the play, the kids act, as in acting, and talking. At Maragon we just sang and danced in groups, and no one really rehearsed words. Oakhill knows how to act and I want to*

audition for the next play' He noticed the difference of quality acting and for my shy little one to want to audition; you must know that it made a huge impression on him.

- **Finally.....**

We have so much to celebrate this term it is almost too much to comprehend: Harry Maarsingh has just been invited to the Mountain Biking World Championships; Mikayla Oliver is representing SWD at the National Swimming Championships; both our boys and girls Prep and College hockey sides have performed admirably at recent tournaments and festivals; Jack Duthie played in the National Amateur Cape Province Open and after 2 days he was actually lying 27th. Jack also finished tied 8th in the South African U19 Strokeplay Championships and he also finished in the top 16 of the South African U19 Matchplay Championships. WOW, we are truly proud of his achievements, congratulations! Melissa Strydom participated in SWD Baseball and won a silver medal; Callam and Logan Tait won gold and silver medals respectively for Karate; Liam Sofianos and Holly Andrews received SWD colours for Biathlon; Rikhardt Bierman is ranked in the top 50 nationally for tennis; Tazio Orzechowski and Sven Botha represented SWD Nippers at the National Champs in Cape Town and Sven also won the Victor Ludorum at the Interschools athletics event. Jason Sherwood won the Victor Ludorum at the College interschool athletics event. Oakhill also excelled in the Inter schools public speaking competition. The winning team in Grade 12: Carly Seager, Jeremy Hemmes and Jurgen Graupe. In Grade 11 they tied for 1st place: Emma Horn, Nick Cuthbert, Jessica Brosicke and Luke Bell. In Grade 10 they tied for 1st place: Bongsi Madokwe, Claudia du Plessis, Robyn Seager and Kathryn Hemmes. In Grade 9 Oakhill came first: Hannah Laughton, Olivia Gardy and Claudia Spilsbury and in Grade 8 we also came first with Josh Carver, Bram Thorpe, Ciara Mayne and Bonnie Collins making a wonderful impact.

It sounds like we are a world championship school, and we are but even more impressive is the fact that we do all these activities and we also excel on the academic front. I have been amazed by the wonderful performance of our College this term. 15% of our pupils achieved an "A" average at the end of term 1; 45% of our pupils achieved a 70% average and our lowest grade average was 64%. The young men and women of Oakhill continue to excel in all spheres and Albert Schweitzer's words certainly ring true here: *Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful.*

There is no doubt that we love what we do here and as a result we can celebrate the successes of all our students this term. Martin Luther King said: *Everybody can be great... because anybody can serve. You don't need to have a University degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.*

I've just returned to my computer to finish this newsletter after having spent an evening with Peter Bishop. I started the newsletter, telling a story about Barbie and I'll end with mentioning another Oakhill legend: Peebee. Peter lost his life partner, Maggie to cancer earlier in the term and despite that, I am amazed at how he continues to give of himself to the young men and women of Oakhill. He certainly has a heart full of grace. He is a soul generated by love and his example of serving at Oakhill, sets the pace for the rest of us. He has truly set an example to others and made a significant difference in the lives of many - Thank you!

Your sons and daughters have really outdone themselves this term and we are immensely proud of each and every achievement. Once again thank you for giving us the privilege of serving you in this wonderful place. Enjoy a restful break with your families!

Kindest regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shane". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial 'S'.

Shane Kidwell