2017

Excel High School

Community Outreach



Excel High School

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**Dear parents,**

Greetings from the School Office, where our customary end-of-year activities are well under way, including the prize-giving function and preparations for the final examinations for grades 8-11. The year has been a challenging one, but the peaks have been higher than the valleys have been deep, and we shall end the year with a sense of fulfilment for all the positive outcomes and educational goals that have been achieved.

The main purpose of this communication is to introduce an exciting new initiative that was first mooted at a Parent Body meeting in 2016 – what to ‘do’ with the learners during the awkward period between their final examinations and the last school day. Previously this gap was largely filled by multifarious humdrum (but very necessay) activities such as classroom cleanups, second-hand book sales and fun sporting events – not to mention extended break times and an impromptu talent show thrown in!

**Diarise the day:** on Monday 4 December the school will be gearing up for …

**Community Outreach 2017**

***To*** *lend a hand where little help there was before*

***To*** *strive to be of service to our fellow man*

***To*** *be the silent answer to a prayer*

There may not always be much silence in all that we do, to judge from the ‘whoops of involvement’ (for want of a better phrase) when two or more of us are gathered in an informal way; but the lines above convey the spirit of the enterprise. The time is ripe for us to become more involved in the community incentives that are springing up on our very doorstep.

The gathering of knowledge *about* the world around us – the theoretical side of things – is all well and good; but unless we can also get up from our behinds and become actively *involved* in the activities and concerns of the world around us, all the bookwork is pretty much a pointless exercise.

“If you're not making someone else's life better, then you're wasting your time. Your life will become better by making other lives better.”

*Will Smith*

With this end in view, we have decided to become more actively involved in certain community activities. We have coined the term ‘Outreach’, which both expresses the location of each activity, and encapsulates the notion of assistance, or partnership, in furthering the specific objective.

The following pages describe in more detail what is being envisaged: what each of the five outreaches involves, and what you need to know.

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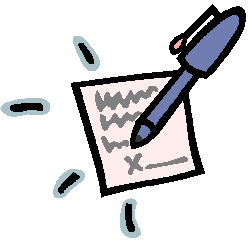
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Signing up

**Not everyone in the school will be going on an Outreach.** As for administration staff – there are always telephones to be manned, and other critical services that need attending to. Some teachers and Grade Heads will also be hard at work collating final exam marks and preparing schedules for the school reports. As for the learners – firstly, logistics dictate that not everyone will be able to be accommodated at our five chosen locations (i.e. space will be a problem); and secondly, there are a number of learners who have expressed a wish to remain at the school, for a variety of reasons.

A questionnaire will be sent out shortly, where parents will have the opportunity to ‘sign up’ their offspring for an Outreach. Please understand that there are limited places available. An appropriate (fun) series of activities is being planned for those remaining at the school. This will take the form of a series of friendly inter-grade and inter-house sports items in the morning, followed by a talent show at lunchtime, and a general knowledge quiz in the afternoon.

The Five Outreaches

Our initial intention was to allocate a specific Outreach to each grade. However, it has subsequently been decided to integrate the Outreaches across the grades, as this would result in a better mixture of abilities and interests. A senior teacher has been put in charge of each of the activities, and gathering points have been identified, as follows:

Animal sanctuary Mr Wessels Room 39

Children’s hospital Ms Kamies Drama Room

Old age home Mrs Skweyiya Room 23

Beach clean-up Mr Abrahams Room 18

Cricket clinic Mr Price Woodwork Room

Animal sanctuary

Animals suffer too, and are subject to a wide range of abuses and depredations. Birds and marine life are naturally included in this category, and we had to take a long and hard look at all the different charities and organisations that fall under this banner, before deciding on one that would be suitable for our purposes. Basically, the idea is to become involved in a very practical way, at some rehabilitation or preservation centre or other, for one whole day – cleaning, feeding, and generally ‘getting our hands dirty’ in a good cause.

Figure : Penguin at pool

***BirdsAlive*** suggested itself very naturally, and we have approached the foundation with our offer of help. They are delighted at the prospect of a dozen or so extra hands at their disposal for a full working day, and they have even tentatively ‘booked’ us for next year as well!

As mentioned above, learners must be prepared to put in a hard (but very satisfying) day’s work, and for this they will need to bring along their toughest old clothes. Gumboots, rubber gloves, heavy-duty aprons and similar paraphernalia will all come in very handy. Although physically tiring, the work is very rewarding, and educational as well. This outreach is almost a ‘must’ for learners taking Life Sciences as a subject, and who are considering employment or further studies in this field after matriculating.

Children’s hospital

The Sunflower Children’s Hospital is already on our list of supported charities, and it was natural that this sterling institution should be included in the Outreach 2017 program. Fortunately they are very close to the school, so that transport and logistical issues will not be much of a problem. Learners from all grades are encouraged to sign up for this one, as there is plenty of scope for them to show real care and concern for their fellow human beings – especially in cases like this, where children have been brought low by ailments and accidents.

Mr Berry has organised a Toy Drive Competition among the grades, irrespective of whether the learners will be going on this Outreach or not: the class that brings in the highest number of good quality (not broken) toys will be treated to a free burger and cooldrink at the local Burger Palace outlet. Learners may also donate suitable board games and puzzles (250 pieces or less – and no *missing* pieces please!)

The lower grade seem to have taken up the challenge with greater enthusiasm. Come on Grades 10–12, show them what you can do! The current grade statistics are as follows:



Old age home

Not to be neglected are our senior citizens. Huis Sonstraal Frail Care Centre is another one of our registered charities that is worthy of our support and outreach. It will be remembered that the founding principal of our school spent some time there after her retirement, and the links forged from this association have continued down the years.

Mrs Witherspoon has unreservedly opened her doors to us once more, and is looking forward to whatever cheer and odds ‘n ends we may bring. On her list of desirable donations for this year are the following:

* Woollen garments
* Non-perishable foodstuffs
* Large-print books
* Magazines and periodicals
* Toiletries (soap, towels, etc.)

More than one senior citizen has expressed a wish to have a well-loved book read out loud to them – perhaps even to a small group of like-minded friends? One just has to mention the author Agatha Christie, and a flood of bon mots[[1]](#footnote-1)♥ come to mind, timeless and comforting: *“Never get bored. Life’s not long enough for that.”* (Christie, 2001, p. 241)

Beach clean-up

The idea of performing a beach clean-up is not a new one, but over the years it has (sadly) become a very necessary one. The negative consequences for our city, if such an operation is not performed regularly, are significant and do not require spelling out. The local municipal services simply do not have the manpower or the time to perform this vital function, so they are only too pleased to ‘farm it out’ to other willing institutions like ourselves.

Nor is the beach clean-up at all onerous, to judge by the popularity of this Outreach and the willingness with which learners are coming forward to volunteer. Black refuse bags will be provided by the school, and the final removal of litter from the beach will be the responsibilty of the municipality; the learners will supply the ‘many hands that make light work’.



Figure : Clean-up 2016

As popular and ‘fun’ as this Outreach is, the requirements for coming on it are pretty strict, as the school has a responsibility towards all concerned that the safety and health of its learners should be protected at all times.

Consider carefully the following:

**NON-NEGOTIABLES**

* Hats MUST be worn at all times
* The use of sun-screen is HIGHLY   
  recommended
* NO swimming gear may be worn
* NO swimming is allowed
* Remain in groups of at least THREE
* Listen to your PREFECT LEADER

Cricket clinic

The Cricket clinic has been included as our fifth Outreach on account of the school’s strong position in the Inter-schools Cricket League, and owing to the representations of our key supporters in this direction. What a wonderful opportunity to *share excellence*, as the gesture takes nothing from our own standing in the League, and it promotes grass-level enthusiasm for cricket.

Everybody wins

This is a good example of a sporting situation in which nobody comes second. Everybody wins, in the sense that what is achieved, at the end of the day, is something more than a technical mastery of how to swing a bat and ‘hit a six’. The residual benefits are, finally, the more important ones, as **HealthFitnessRevolution** expresses it on their website: *“Children playing cricket learn cooperation and other social skills, while building a sense of pride and accomplishment when their team wins.”* (HealthFitnessRevolution, 2017)

Star players

Learners who wish to be included in this Outreach must, naturally enough, already be star players in one of the school’s cricket teams. They will be supported by our own cricket coach, Mr Bartlett, and the PT teachers. On account of the rather fragmentary nature of this Outreach (waiting for learners from other schools to arrive, and periods of relative inactivity followed by periods of active involvement), learners should also preferably make their own travel arrangements, or buy into a ‘lift scheme’, even if they intend using bus transport to get to the venue initially.

Administration

Transport

We have arranged with ABC Tours for five medium-size buses, which will be used to transport learners to the various destinations. This will be the preferred mode of transport, as we will have a greater deal of control over the times of arrival and departure, and it will relieve congestion on the roads. The buses will leave the school premises at 7:30 am sharp, so it is imperative that learners arrive at school well before that time on the day. Mr Berry has organised a discount on bus fees: each learner will pay only R12 for the return journey – another incentive for learners to choose this mode, rather than use their own transport.

Lunch

Because the learners will be out – and in most cases, physically active – for most of the day, it is important that a square meal of sorts be provided. The hostel kitchen has made this easier for us, by putting together a choice of three different meal types, all competitively priced, and designed to cater for different dietary requirements:

* Regular R20
* Halaal R25
* Kosher R25

Learners will certainly not be required to purchase any of the in-house meals, and are welcome to bring something to eat from home. It is important, however, and especially for the more strenuous activities, that learners do NOT try to ‘wing it’ through the day on an empty stomach. So why not take a break from sandwiches and biscuits … Cook has something special on the menu 😉

Payments

The expenses incurred for these Outreaches have, to repeat a phrase, been ‘cut to the bone’. Moreover, the prices that you see quoted above (transport and meal fees) have already been subsidised by our sponsors. So please – upfront payments will be appreciated!

Special Requirements

Each Outreach has its own special requirements, in terms of what to wear and what to bring, and generally what is important. Better to enumerate these at the outset, than simply to ‘do your own thing’ and risk the effectiveness of any activity. Please observe the following guidelines:

**Animal sanctuary:** Old clothes are a must. Bring along a pair of wellington boots if you have them. Rubber gloves and cleaning cloths will also come in handy.

**Children’s hospital:** A friendly and cheerful disposition is important – bring that before all else! Smiles and happy faces outweigh a ton of gifts.

**Old age home:** Senior citizens love interacting with others. A book to read, a board game to play, a musical instrument to demonstrate – you get the idea.

**Beach clean-up:** As mentioned above, hats and sun-screen are critically important. A certain measure of fitness is important, as there will be a lot of walking.

**Cricket clinic:** Regulation cricket clothes must naturally be worn during the sessions. Again, sun-screen and a hat are recommended extras.

Wrapping up

A great deal of effort has already gone into the planning of this event. We at Excel High are confident that it will be a resounding success. The hope has already been expressed in several quarters that there will be a ‘repeat performance’ next year. So we grow from year to year, exploring new avenues of learning and teaching, and ever mindful of our responsibility to ‘give back’ to the community – and to the world at large – what we have received in trust.

My personal thanks, and best wishes, to everyone involved in Community Outreach 2017.

Enjoy the big day, and do your school proud!

(Signed) **Principal: Excel High School**

**Bibliography**

Christie, A., 2001. *Murder in Mesopotamia.* London: HarperCollins.

HealthFitnessRevolution, 2017. *Top 10 Health Benefits of Cricket.* [Online]   
Available at: http://www.healthfitnessrevolution.com/top-10-health-benefits-cricket/  
[Accessed 22 10 2017].

Appendix A: Lucky Draw

A special feature of Community Outreach 2017 is the inclusion of a lucky draw event. While this has little to do with the Outreaches themselves, it will prove an important fund-raiser that will help to cover various expenses incurred in the initiative.



Basically, each learner in the school – irrespective of whether they will be going on an Outreach or not – will be given the opportunity to sell as many lucky draw tickets as possible. The cost per ticket is only R5, so we are hoping for a large number of sales. If each learner sells only 5 tickets, the nett sale amount will exceed R10,000 !!

The lucky draw will then take place on the day following the Outreach, onTuesday 5 December, and the prize (a huge holiday hamper of foodstuffs and you-name-it) immediately shipped off to the lucky winner. The hamper comes at no extra cost to the school: it has been donated by one of our loyal sponsors: BIG thanks to Cost-U-Less!

A lot of care has been bestowed upon the design of the ticket – thanks to the talented grade 11 class that was responsible. Here is a sample ticket:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **R5** | Excel High School | | |
| **Lucky Draw Ticket** |  | **Community** | **ONLY R5** |
| **Outreach** | *Please keep this ticket safe: you will need it to claim your prize.* |
| **2017** |
| *No. 264* | The lucky draw takes place on Tue 5 Dec 17: BE THERE! |  | *No. 264* |

Appendix B: Business and Community Contributors

**A big thanks goes out to ALL OUR CONTRIBUTORS** – parents, community members and business leaders – for the generosity they have shown in making this project a success. Without stalwarts like these, *Community Outreach 2017* would simply not have been possible. Every donation, from biggest to smallest, has been received with appreciation.

That said, we do wish to give special credit to all the community members and business leaders who have journeyed with us in this veture – if for no other reason, then because they have no direct links to the school, and many have come forward selflessly in a good cause. Here they all are:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Contributor** | **Group** | **Help Type** |
| Afrika, P | Business | Money |
| Agulhas, R | Business | Clothing |
| Carelse, P | Business | Money |
| Lunnon, D | Business | Food |
| Ockhuis, F | Business | Money |
| Pypers, L | Business | Money |
| Taliep, N | Business | Food |
| Abraham, J | Community | Money |
| Allie, O | Community | Money |
| Arendse, Q | Community | Transport |
| Brady F. | Community | Clothing |
| Dalhouzie, J | Community | Transport |
| Davids, BR | Community | Money |
| Fortuin, S | Community | Money |
| Fransman, P | Community | Toiletries |
| Hendricks, BF | Community | Clothing |
| Heuvel, G | Community | Money |
| Joseph, S | Community | Toiletries |
| Levendal, PT | Community | Money |
| Lourens, ML | Community | Transport |
| Masombu, K | Community | Money |
| Milo, R | Community | Food |
| Mkonto, MT | Community | Money |
| Rahim, F | Community | Clothing |
| Sherman, R | Community | Transport |
| Snyman, CA | Community | Money |
| Tuck, D | Community | Money |
| Walkinshaw, M | Community | Clothing |
| Wessels, JJ | Community | Food |
| Zietsman, CT | Community | Transport |

1. ♥ Witty saying [↑](#footnote-ref-1)