

****PRESS RELEASE****
FAR SOUTH CONSULTATIVE SEMINAR – Street Children

On Wednesday, 25 April 2018, community members from the far south were invited to a Consultative Seminar that focused on the Street Child. The challenges with the operational processes during a joint after-hours operation in February 2017 were highlighted and laid the foundation for the seminar. This operation saw 9 children removed from the street. The matter was raised with the provincial Department of Social Development (DSD) and monthly meetings with the SRA and MID were held to find a more positive solution to avoid these challenges in the future.

The aim of the seminar was to identify barriers to intervention services and further brainstorm solutions that will facilitate a more positive outcome for vulnerable children found on the streets in the far south. Presentations included a contextual overview from the social worker's perspective. The DSD provided the bulk of the information and presented on legislation and how it relates to the street child, the challenges with the implementation of operating procedures, understanding probation services that are provided to children, the statutory processes and the intervention services offered to families in terms of family preservation and parenting programmes.

The presentation that hit home the most was the story of Shuan Solomons, who highlighted his personal journey as a street child and how he managed to overcome the challenges he faced as a young boy. Growing up, Shuan was surrounded by criminal activity, gangsterism and poverty. Becoming addicted to drugs at the age 13 was therefore not uncommon. He poignantly described how he managed to turn his life around by getting involved in local outreach activities. He was given the opportunity to an alternative life outside of his community and away from his lived reality because of organisations that offered him alternatives to the street life. He chose to finish school and became more involved in community work as a result. Today, Shuan works at Projects Abroad, a local NPO in Muizenberg, where he is able to be part of the change process for many young children. Shuan feels that he can identify with their needs as he once walked in their shoes and understands their perspective. Shuan still lives in his childhood community, walks a different path now and continues to encourage children of his community to do the same.

Chairperson for Safer Together, StreetSmart SA and St James resident, Melanie Burke, facilitated small group discussions in order to gather ideas regarding healthy alternatives on offer to children in the south. Safer Together kindly sponsored the event and the seminar ended with a delicious lunch held at Sunset Restaurant, a StreetSmart restaurant. Further assisting in strengthening the community networks of the south. The seminar ended on an encouraging note and all who attended left having gained more insight into the realities faced by children on the streets. This does not deter from the concern that street children remain a risk to themselves as society often do not view street children as children. This seminar has assisted in forging a way forward for all present and it is hoped that further collaboration between organisations and the DSD in the Far South will strengthen as a result.

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Representatives from Kalk Bay St James Special Rating Area (KBSJ SRA), Muizenberg Improvement District (MID), Fish Hoek Business Improvement District (FHBID), Kalk Bay Business Association (KBBA) SAPS, City Law Enforcement, City of Cape Town Directorate for Social Development & Vulnerable Groups, the Provincial Department of Social Development (DSD), the Western Cape Street Children's Forum (WCSCF), the Child Protection Collaborative (CPC), StreetSmart SA, Safer Together, Waves 4 Change (W4C), Projects Abroad and Community Chest Western Cape were present at the Far South Consultative Seminar held in April at the Peninsula All-Suite Hotel in Sea Point.