



St Mary's School
Waverley
Founded 1888

SENIOR SCHOOL NEWS

23 SEPTEMBER 2022



Tel: 011 531 1800 | info@stmary.co.za | www.stmarysschool.co.za



Celebrating Heritage Day!

FROM THE HEAD'S DESK

St Mary's has had much news to record and to celebrate over the past two weeks of the Michaelmas Term.

The HOPE committee organised a most enjoyable comedy evening which required us to look at ourselves as the complex nation that we are and to laugh loudly. The theme of unity in diversity continued to feature in our chapel and assemblies, as we acknowledged and celebrated Heritage Day.

Tuesday and Wednesday were dedicated to the evaluation of our school by the Office of Independent Schools Evaluations Southern Africa (OISESA). Prior to the two-day visit by OISESA mentors, we undertook an in-depth study guided by standards and indicators which are informed by international evaluation bodies. The internal team, led by Phuti Mogale, dedicated their time to review the scope and workings of our school and to reflect on strategy. This has been a time-consuming exercise, but a valuable one, knowing that effective change comes from within.

I have enjoyed the busy schedule of the past two weeks. It has been rewarding to observe the new student leadership finding their feet and then attending their Form IV formal; the matrics who have had a singular focus writing preliminary examinations; the Form III girls who tackled challenges in preparing to host a fashion show; the updates on Form II girls at Bush School have been a delight; and the Form I girls who joined the seniors at the launch of Joanne Joseph's book, *Children of Sugarcane*. This list does not include the regular and ongoing co-curricular activities. I hope that parents will enjoy reading about the details of participation and achievement in this edition of the newsletter.

All this activity fills the school with youthful spirit and a sense of possibility. Yet, at the same time, we received the tragic news of the loss of a young life and injury to another at a neighbouring Johannesburg school. We live in a time of paradox, of hardship and harsh reality that often leads to numbness about the future. The only response is surely intervention and engagement by all citizens to create a safer, kinder, quieter life for our children. Mosa Mdladla, deputy head girl elect for 2023, led prayer in chapel on Tuesday and asked God to "quiet our lives".

DEANNE KING
HEAD OF SCHOOL

FROM THE CHAPLAIN

[St Mary's school] is committed to embodying Jesus' love for all and his refusal to treat as "other" those whom the society of his day marginalised. Thus, and in line with the school's commitment to be a South African school, St Mary's seeks to encourage respect for and understanding of a rich and vibrant diversity within its community, on the part of girls, parents and staff (Statement on Christian identity and ethos #16).

Celebrating Heritage Day is celebrating our community. It is a recognition that there is an ambivalence present in all encounters between peoples, cultures, and spiritual traditions. This ambivalence was also present at the annunciation. As the African theologian Claude Ozankom puts it:

"a foreign arrival is an event with unknown outcome. The uncertainty cannot be eliminated in advance even when the event is the arrival of Jesus Christ. The reason is that the arrival of "[one] who comes from afar" is felt in all cultures of the world as something ambivalent: the foreigner may be a threat, a danger or a chance for the individual or for the community that receives [them]" (Ozankom 2003:97)

In Senior School, the chapel services for this week focused on our relationship with the school's Christian identity and ethos, and on the religious diversity in our community.

Wishing you all a blessed Heritage Day.

REVD RAKGADI KHOBO
CHAPLAIN



MEET THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT



Alison Andrew
HoD
BSocSc, PDip (UCT), PGCE
(Wits)



Dani Cooper
BA Hons, PGCE (Wits)



Emily Dingle
BA Hons (UCT), PGCE (NWU)

OPEN DOOR

The Open Door team consists of three psychologists who work closely with all members of the school in the area of learning and development. Their role is to collaborate with members of staff, parents and other relevant professionals, to ensure the well-being of our girls.

The team provides several workshops and preventative interventions for the school across the grades. They also host a Muse Morning each term based on the needs of the school, to which professionals are invited to discuss relevant issues. Parents are invited to join these informative meetings.

Introducing the Open Door team:

Lara Rammutla is an educational psychologist who is responsible for the care of girls in Grades 6 and 7 as well as Forms IV and V. She is also responsible for IEB accommodations in the Senior School. Should you have any concerns or need support for your child, please contact her on 011 531 1876 or email her at Lara.Rammutla@stmary.co.za.

Simone Braude is an educational psychologist who is responsible for the care of girls and boys in Little Saints and the girls in the Junior Primary (Grades 0 to 3). She also runs the Circle of Security Parenting® course. Should you have any concerns or need support for your child, please contact her on 011 531 1843 or email her at Simone.Braude@stmary.co.za.

Buhle Tshabalala is an educational psychologist who is responsible for the care of girls in Grades 4 and 5 as well as Forms I, II and III. Should you have any concerns or need support for your child, please contact her on 011 531 1821 or email her at Buhle.Tshabalala@stmary.co.za.

SIMONE BRAUDE
EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST



Lara Rammutla



Simone Braude



Buhle Tshabalala

CHILDREN OF SUGARCANE BOOK LAUNCH

On Thursday 15 September, St Mary's hosted author and acclaimed media personality, Joanne Joseph, for an evening of conversation and engagement. I was honoured to speak to Joanne about her recently published novel, *Children of Sugarcane*.

The book is a work of historical fiction and tells the story of Shanti Manickam. The protagonist, Shanti, is a young and promising Indian girl who grows up in the Madras Presidency, India. By November 1874 Shanti is transported to the colony of Natal where she takes up work as an indentured labourer. *Children of Sugarcane* is largely set against the backdrop of colonial Southern Africa and describes life on the cruel sugar plantations of Natal. It addresses several themes, spans many decades, and introduces a variety of different characters each of whom teach Shanti an important lesson. Joseph's debut work of fiction focuses on courage, friendship, education, and love. It questions systems of exploitation, highlights the evil of human greed, and reminds us that even 'victims of circumstance' can lead lives filled with joy and purpose. The book repeatedly prompts the reader to consider the expectations and roles of women in the 19th and early 20th centuries, specifically under colonial control. At its core, *Children of Sugarcane*, is about uncovering the hidden histories of women. While technically the characters are fictional, the book draws on extensive historical research and provides an accurate and useful account of indenture - all from a woman's perspective.

The evening comprised a question and answer session with my leading the initial conversation before the audience was invited to ask Joanne questions of their own. My interaction with Joanne discussed, among other aspects, the experience of writing historical fiction in South Africa, the challenges of researching a period that is arguably largely undocumented, the significance of certain characters and the importance of reading.

Joanne explained that some of the characters in *Children of Sugarcane* were inspired by real historical figures whom she came across in the archives. It was revealed that Father John is one such character - Joanne loosely based him on an Anglican priest who, as the records suggest, possessed progressive and liberal views of Indian indentured labourers despite the prejudice of his historical context. The author also went on to describe that, in trying to record her own family history, the desire to write *Children of Sugarcane* blossomed. Joanne suggested that there are elements of her maternal great-grandmother, who came to Natal in 1884, within the book.

In discussing the importance of reading and education, Joanne empathised with our pupils and acknowledged their reluctance, at times, to read. She elaborated on the impact of Covid-19 as well as the distraction of screens and social media which consumes many of our girls. Importantly, however, she concluded that reading is vital for learning, for expression, for escape and as she said, "for survival".

With an audience of over 160 people and, judging by the engaged questions asked by those seated in The Edge, it was a successful evening. I was particularly proud of our student body when the author remarked how impressed she was with the thoughtfulness of the questions posed by our girls. The questions asked by our pupils - the majority being in Form I - included: whether Joanne found any particularly interesting details about the living conditions or domestic life of women in the mid-1800s; why Indian communities have retained such a strong sense of community despite the disruption and trauma of colonialism according to Joanne and her research, and would she consider offering *Children of Sugarcane* as a high school set work.

Joanne replied to each of these questions with detail and care. As many may remember from her time spent as a host on Radio 702, Joanne is articulate and sharp but as I witnessed last Thursday, she is also exceptionally warm. She meaningfully engaged with the audience during the discussion as well as afterwards when signing copies of her novel.

Works such as *Children of Sugarcane* are welcomed and praised at St Mary's because of what they mean and represent. Firstly, the novel provides something a textbook often cannot - that being a unique, emotive, and immersive account of history. And, secondly, Joanne's novel serves to foster the concept of 'HerStory' - a movement whereby modern historians and researchers are recoding history from female perspectives or revising historical periods of time in order to expose and include the voices of women more frequently and more loudly. Although the concept of 'HerStory' can be understood as merely "a clever pun", I believe it is something we should be encouraging our students to do. Our girls, like the character of Shanti, should feel empowered to use their voices, record their stories and make history.

ALISON ANDREW
HOD: HISTORY



LEADERSHIP COURSE

During our leadership course on the Tuesday 6 and Wednesday 7 September, we focused on different aspects of leadership. We learned about leadership in terms of the individual, the Form group and in the broader St Mary's community.

We were visited by a guest speaker, Simon Hurry, on Tuesday and learned about our different personalities and how to utilise our individual strengths to achieve our perception of success and happiness.

Later, some matrics generously made time to talk to us about their experiences in the leadership programme. One key takeaway from the discussion was the reminder to build each other up as leaders by communicating ideas to one another and helping somebody who is struggling to juggle schoolwork and duties.

Knowing that leadership does not have to be faced alone and that we can rely on others in our Form eased some of my fears going into the next stage of my school career. Other advice included the suggestions to be kind and use empathy in dealing with conflict, the tips about using schedules and planning ahead as well as to have fun in the role but to remember to be a leader and a role model first.

On Wednesday morning, we explored the impact we wanted our leadership to have on the broader St Mary's community with Ms Thomson and Ms Shepherd. We started by doing team-building activities which helped us to develop communication and practise resolving conflict among ourselves. After these activities, we talked about responsibility, communication, integrity and community and how to live out these values in our roles. These conversations helped us to develop plans to foster a caring and connected school environment during our leadership year.

Later on, Ms Mogale talked to us about different values that individual leaders should have. Her words about humility, resilience and 'leading from behind' were thought-provoking and I learned much from the experiences that she shared. I also appreciated how she pushed us to assume roles that we would not naturally gravitate toward in our group activities. Like Mr Hurry's course, she helped to show us that being a leader is something that anybody can do if given the right situation.

Our final activity was a Drum Café in which we were able to release stress and enjoy playing as a group. We played *djembe* drums and tambourines and some people danced. We were challenged to follow melodies using boomwhackers. This workshop was a fun way to end an important and informative course.

This course helped us to learn about ourselves and one another in order to become the best leaders that we can be.

ANNA SHAW
HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS



THE WITS INTEGRATED EXPERIENCE

In July, five of our Form IV students were invited to participate in the Wits Integrated Experience with students from 50 other schools. They spent a day at Wits University during which they were introduced to a scenario involving an airplane crash and then attended a series of sessions dealing with the scientific, legal, geographic, psychological, ethical and medical aspects of this disaster.

The students were tasked with investigating and establishing the causes of the crash and they returned to Wits on Monday 22 August to present their findings. Our team delivered a superb presentation which incorporated international affairs, physics, geography, dance and a great deal more. This was the first time that St Mary's has participated in the Wits Integrated Experience and our girls were very impressive indeed.

FELICIA TOBIAS
DEPUTY HEAD: ACADEMICS



VISUAL ARTS

Wearable art

The Form III and Form IV art students were tasked with revamping the mannequins that look out onto The Close from the top floor of The Edge. The inspiration for the designs of wearable art were from two artists: Mary Sibande and Yinka Shonibare. The students had to use elements of these artists' designs in their own sculptures and incorporate *Shweshwe* print, Victorian dress structures and a range of fabrics and textures. The artists had great fun and let their creativity shine through in these innovative and colourful designs.

DANIELLE MOWATT
HOD: VISUAL ARTS



ARTS FESTIVAL

A vibrant poster for St Mary's Arts Festival. The background is dark blue with a large yellow circle on the left. A stylized figure with a purple afro, blue shirt, and black pants stands on a yellow platform, pointing upwards. The title 'St Mary's Arts Festival' is in large, bold, red letters. Below the title, there are illustrations of musical notes, two champagne glasses clinking, a paint palette, a saxophone, a burger and fries, and a microphone. The text 'Free entrance' is in white, followed by 'SATURDAY 1 OCTOBER 2022' in red. The time '10H00 TO 16H00' is in white. A list of activities is in white text: ORCHESTRA, MARIMBA, CHOIR, ART, DANCE, BALLET, DRAMA, PUBLIC SPEAKING, POETRY READING, PICNIC IN THE CLOSE, MARKET STALLS, BAR, and TEA GARDEN. A red circular logo with 'ST MARY'S ARTS FESTIVAL' is at the bottom right.

St Mary's Arts Festival

Free entrance

SATURDAY
1 OCTOBER 2022

10H00 TO 16H00

ORCHESTRA
MARIMBA
CHOIR
ART
DANCE
BALLET
DRAMA
PUBLIC SPEAKING
POETRY READING
PICNIC IN THE CLOSE
MARKET STALLS
BAR
TEA GARDEN

**ST MARY'S
ARTS
FESTIVAL**

IT SHOWCASE

Each year, the IT matric students work exceptionally hard on their Practical Assessment Task (PAT). This involves the girls choosing a scenario that requires a solution to a specific problem or where an application or a game needs to be developed. Each student uses the programming language that they work with as well as a database and/or a text file to develop a solution based on the proposed problem.

This year, the students had an opportunity to showcase their work to students in Forms II, III and IV who are either studying IT or interested in taking IT. This was a lovely afternoon where the matric students were able to share their hard work and reflect on how far they have come. The Form IV girls were able to visualise and start thinking about their own projects for next year, while the younger forms were able to get excited about the possibilities of what they would be able to create in the future. We hope this is an event that will continue to grow in the future.

LILIAN SOUTHEY
HOD: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY



ROWING

The first two weeks of rowing have been tough but rewarding. All the age groups have been training consistently and are building up their fitness on the ergos and during the strength and conditioning sessions. The girls have been working hard throughout the water sessions at Victoria Lake to improve their rowing stroke, strength and endurance. These sessions have also been effective in teaching the new U14s the basic rowing technique.

On Saturday 17 September, the U14s, U15s and U19s competed in the annual St Andrew's Indoor Regatta. St Mary's began the first regatta strongly with Sinead Erasmus and Danelia Price-Hughes placing 1st and 3rd respectively in the JW19 2000m individual race. In the JW14 1000m team event, St Mary's placed 2nd and in the JW19 2000m team event, St Mary's claimed both gold and silver. Well done to all the girls who participated.

The beginning of this term has been successful and the prospect of the season ahead is an exciting one for the St Mary's rowing club.

"The oars gave me power, but also taught me humility." Barry S. Strauss

SOPHIA BABYA
FORM III



Opens winning gold and silver in the team event



St Mary's at the St Andrew's indoor regatta



Opens on stage collecting their gold and silver medals

TENNIS

The Spring tennis league is in full swing, and all the St Mary's teams got off to an excellent start in their first league matches. Congratulations to the St Mary's E and F team for beating Redhill A and B. Keep up the enthusiasm and hard work.

Results for matches played on Tuesday 13 September:

St Mary's A beat Northcliff A 45-18
 St Mary's B beat Northcliff B 51-12
 St Mary's C/D Bye
 St Mary's E beat Redhill A 34-29
 St Mary's F beat Redhill B 48-15
 St Mary's G lost to Helpmekaar C 28-35
 St Mary's H beat Helpmekaar D 45-18

RENÉ PLANT
 HEAD OF TENNIS

SQUASH

The St Mary's Senior School squash team attended the Joburg Junior Squash prize giving held on the Wednesday 14 September at St John's College. We won the prestigious Castle Aggregate trophy which we have won for six years in a row. St Mary's was also awarded certificates for coming second in the U19 A, U19 B and the U16 A league as well as trophies for winning the U14 A and U15 A league.

PANASHE SITHOLE
 SQUASH COACH



ED-ADMIN PARENT PORTAL

St Mary's uses a school management information system called Ed-Admin to distribute termly school reports and to provide parents with an opportunity to inspect and amend personal information recorded in our database.

Below, please find details as to how to access the Ed-Admin St Mary's parent portal:

- You will require a Parent ID whenever signing into the parent portal. If you are unsure of your Parent ID, please email portal@stmary.co.za with both you and your daughter's names and surnames for assistance.
- To access the St Mary's parent portal, please click on the link below or visit the school website on www.stmarysschool.co.za and click on the portal login on the top right of the page.
<https://stmarysw.ed-space.net/pparentportal.cfm>
- Enter in your Parent ID and choose 'forgot password'. Please ensure that you enter the email address that St Mary's has on record and enter in the CAPTCHA code.
- You will then receive an email. Once received, click on the link in order to set up your password. Choose a secure password. You will then receive another email to confirm your password has been changed. You can now proceed to log into the portal.

If you experience problems logging into the secure portal, please contact portal@stmary.co.za.