

We enjoyed our time with Dreamcatcher in South Africa a great deal! We came to Dreamcatcher via word of mouth recommendation upon meeting a lady called Dana van Hes in Curaçao who put us in contact with Dreamcatcher. This was followed by a period of intensive working together by email and skype with founder, Anthea Rossouw who assisted us to develop our programme and project. Due to working in the communities and understanding what makes it as it is, it was possible for us to develop a meaningful research programme with Anthea and her team at Dreamcatcher as they have all the localised knowledge.

Besides the volunteering and research work for our University curriculum we had a wonderful adventure as well, as part of what Anthea offers, is her passion and knowledge of the country. We also learned a lot about the historical developments in South Africa which lead to the specific, complex and unique socio-economic circumstances in communities across South Africa.



Postcard



**From: Marijke and &
Marjolein,
Netherlands**

**Volunteered in:
Melkhoutfontein**

When: 2013

This prepared us well for our volunteer and research work as well as our interaction with the locals. We lived in the community and came into contact with the Afrikaans language on a daily basis which was also very meaningful to us. Because we stayed at various Dreamcatcher Homestays, we came to become one of the community and understand much better what makes the communities tick and the way they are. We enjoyed our life very much - each day was a new adventure and experience. The people are incredible at grass roots: it is nothing unusual for the children to come and give you a spontaneous hug and a broad smile EVEN THOUGH THEY LIVE IN ABJECT POVERTY. They make the most of every day and don't complain as we Dutch do too often. Though they struggle and life is a challenge, they take each day as it comes. We learned that commodities and money cannot secure happiness. It came from the hearts of the people we came into contact with Dreamcatcher. Soon we learned that this indeed is the ethos of Dreamcatcher working and living with the communities who make the most of life every day in a very positive way.

Life is beautiful, no matter if we have or don't have material goods. The most beautiful smile in the world, could be the smile of a poor person or child that has nothing to show or give, but the warmth feeling from their heart...

Writing our thesis about schooling and the impact which the local community has in Melkhoutfontein was extremely interesting. The views and discussions gladly offered to us by teachers, parents, Dreamcatcher staff and children helped us a great deal to complete our study. It was very rewarding to do our research at the Melkhoutfontein Primary School. The principal and teachers were very helpful. Our findings were an eye opener: Many of the parents reported that they felt they could not help their children or get involved due to lack of schooling themselves, without understanding the strength of how much showing interest, encouragement gives a child a "leg up" and watching over them to do their homework contributes to their advance and confidence.

We encouraged the parents not to doubt themselves and we built relationships which will last and live in us forever. Along the route as we learned of the needs, we discovered that there was no library at the Primary School. In discussions this was found to be a very big need. We had a brainstorming session with the School Principal, recruited some parents and together we worked really hard to make that dream come true. We painted and decorated, classified some books which were lying in disuse and the Principal can now motivate at regional level for more books as she now has a working library in the school. So we "lived the dream" with Dreamcatcher in the community! Though our time was up and we could not do everything we set out to do in the library

The community made us so welcome at all times, walking in the roads, past the churches which are a corner stone of the culture and where we always received a warm welcome and a smile. We got many big hugs and we found that in the community of Melkhoutfontein one is never truly alone. This helps when life is a challenge. We left the message that parents can help their dreams for their children to come alive and we learned that people with very little taught us about life. It was reciprocal and mutual.

In our final perspective: We loved the community and we felt very much cared for by the Dreamcatcher Foundation Kamammas and Staff. We learned that life is too short to complain. During our time we thus learned, to - and developed to become Dreamcatchers ourselves: to LIVE THE DREAM and make it happen! This was a good lesson to us and we will take this forward into our future.

Dreamcatcher and the community will always have a very special place in our hearts and we will be back for sure - in fact we will never say good bye as they live in us now..

Thank you Anthea, Katrina and Dreamcatcher team. Thank you Melkhoutfontein, Stilbaai.

Marijke and Marjolein

June 2013.

Post script: Marijke and Marjolein were awarded distinction (first class pass) for their thesis by their University. Meeting up with them recently in the Netherlands, Marjolein reported that she was extremely honoured and happy to get a job immediately on leaving the University and believes that her experience with Dreamcatcher contributed to her ability to get and manage the job which calls for working on a “flex” system whereby she has to adapt to different children and life situations every day. Marjolein is continuing her studies.

Both say they yearn to be back and WILL go back to their Dreamcatcher home in Melkhoutfontein South Africa one day as soon as they can. We will watch Marijke and Marjolein with pride and gratitude: as back in South Africa, they have left a legacy and made a difference. It is a win-win situation for everyone involved. Our heartfelt congratulations and thanks on behalf of the many parents, children and tutors for “walking the talk” with us. Dreamcatcher Anthea and Team.