

Dear Parents/Guardians

Thank you to the many parents who attended their daughter's House cocktail function on the eve of Half Term. Functions such as this one offer an opportunity for parents to interact on an informal, social level, and are normally enjoyed by all. Unfortunately the Championship Gala scheduled for earlier that week had to be postponed on two occasions due to electrical storms in the area, but I am delighted that it eventually took place this Monday.

Results of this Gala and other school activities, as well as special achievements and news of general interest to parents, are available to parents via our D6 Communicator, as well as on our [Facebook](#) pages. If you have not downloaded the D6 Communicator as yet, please do so by clicking on [this link](#).

Recent achievements of which I would like to make special mention are the following:

- **Bunty Howard's** invitation to attend the World Jumping Challenge Final to be held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan early in September. Only 20 horse riders worldwide are invited to this event.
- **Annie Thornton-Dibb** who was selected for the SA U17 A team due to play in the EU Nations' Junior Water Polo Cup Tournament in BRNO, Czech Republic, at the end of the month.
- **Josie Dobejn**, selected for the SA U17 B Water Polo team to play against Zimbabwe in Durban next week.
- **Katinka Botha, Cassandra Brown** and **Jessica Lee**, all of whom received Honours Awards for their academic achievements.
- **Rebecca Erskine** and **Elinor Capostagno**, chosen to represent South Africa in Eventing in a competition taking place in Harare at the end of this month.

STAFF

Andrews' parents should be aware of the recent announcement that their daughters' Housemother, **Mrs Heather Robb**, will be retiring at the end of the term. We are grateful for her dedicated service in this role and in her previous position of Boardermistress, and we will officially bid farewell to her in a few weeks' time. **Mrs Jo Fryer**, Senior Assistant: Boarding, will take on the role of Housemother until a permanent appointment is made.

MARKETING

The last of our four parent functions was held on February 27 at the home of **Sharon and Marc Wells** in Durban. Prior to that, functions were hosted by **Nicky and Alistair Franklin** (Johannesburg), **Kim and Luke McNally** (Midlands) and **Angela and John Campbell** (Hilton). Demand for admission to St Anne's remains very pleasing with the overall "standard" of girls applying for admission, impressive. 170 applicants are currently registered for 2019 of whom 100 have already confirmed that they will be writing the ABTs in May. The deadline for registration is 23 March 2018, while Bursary Applications and Form As must be submitted by close of day on April 20.

COMPASSION

At the Durban function, I referred to an article I recently read that deals with the need to strengthen compassion in schools. The following is a summary of the article that supports my recent caution to parents and pupils that society appears to be becoming increasingly self-centred and isolationist, and that we cannot afford to develop the potential of any one pupil at the expense of other pupils. (Refer to my quote in Newsletter No 1 "*If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together.*")



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A team of Harvard researchers recently reported that when they asked 10 000 middle and high school students which of achievement, happiness or caring for others was most important, 80% chose achievement or happiness over benevolence. The evidence suggests that adults are partly responsible for this response. In the Harvard study, 80% of the students said their parents were more concerned about their achievements than about them caring for others. Students were three times more likely to agree than disagree with the statement, *"My parents are prouder if I get good grades in my classes than if I'm a caring community member in class and school."* They had similar perceptions of what teachers value.

The Harvard team noted that the sad irony of parents' overemphasis on personal achievement and happiness is that it produces neither. Instead, it invariably creates stressed-out children who lack the coping skills to bounce back from disappointment. Conversely, numerous studies have shown that when we help others, we increase our own sense of well-being and, therefore, an important lesson to offer pupils is that the most important achievements and the greatest happiness are to be found in helping others.

So what do we do to encourage the development of caring community members? Your response to this important question may refer to the encouragement of greater empathy. In a paper entitled *"Empathy and compassion. Current Biology"*, the authors **Singer** and **Klimecki** refer to brain research that shows that we fire almost identical neural networks when we see others in pain as when we experience pain ourselves. We can actually feel others' pain which can prompt us to rush to their aid. But this can also create empathic distress or burnout when we feel others' pain too intensely or for too long. I have a sense that this is sometimes true of some of our very caring St Anne's girls.

What's often more important than empathy is a different emotion, one that fires entirely different neural networks in our brains and causes us to feel for other people – becoming concerned for their well-being and wanting to help them, yet not necessarily mirroring their emotions. This emotion is **compassion** and it turns out that we're more likely to help others when we feel compassion rather than empathy.

With this in mind, I am pleased that one of the values that is an important component of our College's Vision and Mission Statement is that of *"Reaching out"* which is explained as involving compassion, humility and service.

References:

- Goodwin, B. (2017). Wanted: Compassion. When empathy wanes, the best response might be to strengthen compassion. *ASCD Educational Leadership*, 75/3, 80-81.
- Singer, T. & Klimecki, O.M. (2014). Empathy and compassion. *Current Biology*, 24 (18), R875-R878).
- Weissbourd, R., & Jones, S.M. with Anderson, T.R. Kahn, J. & Russell, M. (2014). *The children we mean to raise: The real messages adults are sending about values*. Cambridge, MA: Making Caring Common Project, Harvard Graduate School of Education



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MATRIC BALL

Saturday evening's Matric Ball is obviously a highlight of our 6th Form pupils' school careers but the build-up to this event can be very stressful for those involved. Thank you to the 6th Form parents for the support, both emotional and logistical, that you have offered your daughters in the past few weeks.

Kind regards

Dave Arguile
COLLEGE HEAD

