**Dear Parents and Guardians**

**Newsletter 16: ‘Caring for the Cuddlies’**

We hope that this newsletter finds you in good spirits and coping with all the ‘curve balls’ that seem forever to be flying our way. Admittedly it is rather late in the term to be sending out yet another school appeal, engaged as we now are with the mid-year examinations; and the ongoing renovations in the Sports Complex are not helping matters either. HOWEVER ...

It has come to our attention over the past few months, both from reports in the media and from our own local experiences and stories that reach teachers' ears, that the number of neglected, abused and unwanted animals in our area has increased dramatically, to the extent that the situation is now demanding immediate and decisive action. Winter is already upon us, with temperatures plummeting and winds howling, and domestic animals especially are bearing the brunt. Even our pupils are being negatively affected, with more than one class discussion turning on ‘What I saw the other day...’ or ‘Can you believe that anyone could be so unfeeling ...’.

Enough is enough! Following upon a meeting last week with senior members of the School Governing Body, it has decided that the school will become actively involved in addressing the problem. More than that – we are planning not only to heal the symptoms, but more specifically to strike at the *root causes of the problem*. A concerted effort is needed. We need support in numbers of people who are themselves committed to righting the wrongs. We need YOU!

Operation ‘Caring for the Cuddlies’ will have a big impact on the school, in terms of resources and time commitments, and we need to coordinate our efforts carefully right from the start. We need to tap into our abilities and become inspired.

# Cuddlies Club

The biggest ‘voice’ in a school (at least in terms of numbers), is the pupil body, and we thought it necessary to give the children themselves a platform for sharing their ideas, and for implementing some of the projects that we have planned. If the pupils can take joint ownership of this worthwhile enterprise, raising awareness about animal abuse and animal neglect, and putting the message ‘out there’ at grass-roots level, we are already more than halfway there.

It is envisaged that the Cuddlies Club will be headed by two prefects (Morné Stander and one other), and consist of one additional representative from each grade. The core membership will be augmented with other interested pupils – hopefully at least one from each register class. Activities of the Cuddlies Club could include the following:

Media Displays

Strategically placed media displays around the school can be used to attract the attention of a number of people over an extended period. We have a well-equipped media centre and computer facilities, and it should be no problem to research the necessary source material and publish relevant information.

Poster Competition

A poster competition with a distinctly domestic animal-care theme could be devised by the CC and implemented as part of the Media Display initiative (see above). A single picture can paint a thousand words, and what we’re looking for here is lots of images and colour – visually appealing material that will help to create awareness. This will be an informal way for the whole school to become involved. Grade 8 and 9 pupils will be specially targeted.

Book Placeholder Project

It was suggested that we try to include one or two activities that might also generate a little income. This might then be donated to animal welfare organisations such as the Animal Anti-Cruelty League, or TEARS, a non-profit organisation whose core aims are to rescue and rehabilitate abandoned and neglected animals, and to educate communities, in particular the children. Organisations such as these do a big job, and we have an obligation to support them in every way we can.

Saturday Morning Dog Wash

Here’s a golden opportunity for those who have little artistic ability, but who wouldn’t object to getting their hands dirty for a good cause (though ‘wet’ is perhaps the operative word here). We could charge R20 per dog, depending on the size of the animal, and once more channel the proceeds to a worthy animal cause.

# Outgoing Correspondence

In spite of our increased reliance on e-mail and other forms of electronic communication, we still send and receive far too much paper, as official letters, flyers, etc. Why not add a suitable animal-friendly quotation to the reverse sides of outgoing correspondence? Something like this:

“The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.” *Mahatma Gandhi*

Viability will have to be tested against the practicalities: reverse printing requires more time and money. The School Management Team will take a decision. In the meantime, have a look at some of the quotations we have assembled so far (click on the icon in the box alongside).

Doggies’ Dinner

A dress-up dinner evening is being planned for October. Details are still sketchy (and will be discussed further at our meeting in the new term), but ideas such as wearing name-tags that have the name of your pet, or bringing along a tin of your own pooch's favourite dog food for donation to the SPCA. The charge for this is still to be decided: part will be used to cover the catering, and part will go towards the AACL (Animal Anti-Cruelty League). Invitations will be sent out before the end of term.

Parade the Pooch

As a fun event early in the 4th term, before we get down to the serious business of the matric valedictory, prize-giving, final exams, etc., we thought it might be a good idea to host a comic dog show, which will give everyone an opportunity to ‘let their hair down’ by showing off their pet (and themselves) in various categories – Brightest Eyes, Floppiest Ears, Most Like Owner, and Best Dressed. In addition to the these ‘fun’ categories, there will also be a compulsory Obstacle Course category, in which ALL dogs will be expected to take part. Times will be recorded, and one of our sponsors has indicated that there will be one or two rather special prizes up for grabs – so don’t miss this!

Get-Well Card Project

A wonderful idea was put forward by the Deputy Principal – a Get-well Card project! Parents and others will be encouraged to buy a set of customised get-well cards, produced by pupils in the Art Department, for use whenever they need to send such a card to someone who is feeling ill or recovering from a mishap. The cards will be obtainable from the school secretary. The inside of the card will look like the example below.

Yours in education excellence,

**Mr J.R. Barksole: School Principal**

