

Streetscapes News

From Jesse...



Dear Readers,

The festive season brings celebrations and gifts that many of us look forward to, yet walking through the city, we pass people asking for help. These moments stir up feelings - sympathy, unease, frustration at a problem that feels too big to solve.

This issue looks at the real stories behind homelessness. It's rarely about bad choices. More often it starts with family breakdown, personal tragedy, or grinding poverty. Understanding this helps us find better solutions.

People think Cape Town has plenty of services for the homeless — shelters, rehab programs, and support centres. The reality? These only reach one in five people who need them, and most get no help to rebuild their lives.

Money problems break families apart. When relatives can't help, and jobs are scarce, more people end up on the streets.

But homelessness isn't just a number. You'll meet people here who face huge challenges as they work to turn things around. Each person has their own story worth hearing.

This holiday season, look past the outstretched hand. See the person behind it.

Wishing you a blessed holiday season.

Jesse



Clinton: finding his way back

Behind Clinton Hendricks' calm presence lies twenty hard years on Cape Town's streets.

"I was homeless, moving between gangs, destroying myself with drugs," he says. "I dug through bins for food and robbed tourists to feed my habit."

Prison became a revolving door. There, he joined the Number 28s - one of South Africa's prison gangs, notorious for settling scores through violence. "It made everything worse," he admits. "Those years are lost to me now."

When he found Streetscapes, Clinton had lost touch with reality. Weekly counseling sessions helped him rebuild. He learned new ways to communicate, growing steadier and more confident.

Today, Clinton supervises his own team at Streetscapes. As a peer field worker, he helps others find their way to rehab, reconnect with family, and access medical care.

"Now I can really help people," he says. "I know what it's like. I understand what they're going through."



The sculptor of second chances

For two decades, Ashwill called Company Gardens home. Under Table Mountain's gaze, he weathered Cape Town's elements from a park bench, his artistic hands idle.

One message changed everything: "Rudi's looking for you."

Now he sits in our workshop, resplendent in a suit and orange tie, showing off photos of his clay sculptures - intricate figures born from the same hands that once scrounged for survival.

"By October I had a job. By December, three certificates," he says, marking his milestones at Streetscapes with precise pride.

His smile brightens talking about his new home. A real shower. A proper bed. His own space to create. But it's clear his greatest masterpiece isn't clay - it's hope.

At Streetscapes, he's found more than work. "We're family here," he says simply. After twenty years in the Gardens, Ashwill's finally home.



Trust Takes Time

One loss changed everything for Zulpha. When her mother died in 2015, her mother's boyfriend forced her out. With two small children and no money, she ended up on the streets.

"I was lost," she says quietly. "I didn't know what to do."

Drug addiction followed. Then came the hardest blow - her children were taken away by social services. Moving from street to street, she later had another child.

Seven months at Streetscapes have helped her rebuild. She's fighting her addiction, working steadily, and most importantly, her children are back.

"My biggest relief is that I have all my children with me now."

At a recent workshop, she tells us she's working on trust. "I really struggle to let people get close," she admits, pen hovering over paper. But she's here, sharing her story. It's a start.



If you found this newsletter interesting...

Dear reader,

If you found our newsletter interesting and entertaining, please consider passing it on to people you know who would appreciate gaining a greater insight into the plight of the homeless, and the positive change that Streetscapes, as well as other organisations, are making to transform the unhomed into valued, productive members of society.

Together, we definitely make a difference!

You can visit our website to be included in our mailing list at streetscapes.org.za, or email us at: info@streetscapes.org.za, and we'll do the rest!

Yours,

The Streetscapes Newsletter Team