

Families In The Community

By Martie du Plessis



The work of Dynamis sees me travelling extensively, and has also exposed me to meeting many families, one of which is the Greeff family from Vereeniging.

The Greeff's - Johan in the corporate world and Ilona a trained teacher - started home educating their children ten years ago, not because the mom was a teacher, but because Johan believed that home education entailed freedom and afforded more growing opportunities. At the time their children were aged 6, 4 and 1, and at the time of writing they are 15, 13 and 10 respectively. The ten-year journey had its equal share of challenges and positive experiences. One challenge the family had to face was when Henro, the eldest, was involved in a serious accident in October 2013, leaving him in ICU for two weeks with serious head injuries, and in an induced coma for six days. The fam-

ily had to rely on the prayers of family, friends, and other believers and God's hand only, and today testify that they have experienced the authenticity of miracles in their lives. Henro amazingly survived this trauma and today he is a bright, gifted young man without any brain damage (as was predicted).

This experience also saw Johan declaring the need for a second chance to equip his children in different ways and to be personally involved in their educational journey. The result was a change in direction and a renewed vision for a different education that was geared more to real-life experiences and expectations - while the vision was clear to Ilona, the 'how' remained unknown and uncertain. The challenge lay in changing her mind-set, of the end goal not being a matric certificate, but rather that her children would be allowed to live and

be exposed to real life (relevant) situations through their unique gifts. Ilona soon realised that she had to embrace the uniqueness of their educational journey since this journey differs from family to family.

The Greeff family changed the direction of their lives literally by acting on the parable of the bread and fish, and started to work with what they had. As a single income family they were forced to move out of their comfort zone to generate additional income, and jointly decided to work at this together. Through this the children got first-hand exposure to real business and real survival skills. Johan, being an entrepreneur and now working for himself directed the way. Ilona, being a hands-on teacher and witnessing her kids enjoying this type of approach over the years, decided to use this method to expose other children to the same

approach. The family started to do three-hour Fischertechnik workshops (fischertechnik.co.za) in small groups, where the three kids were the teachers (Ilona believes that a child learns best when he/she can teach someone else). Henro stated that if a child understands a concept he or she is supposed to teach others what they have learned. The focus of the workshops is for kids to experience technology, science and applied science in a real-life style.

Ron Beyers of Young Engineers and Scientists of South Africa says, "While universities may well be pushing out certificated individuals, there is a need to transform job seekers into professionals who are able to talk-the-talk as well as walk-the-walk. The brain drain, coupled with the effects of the AIDS pandemic, is leading to an ever decreasing supply of qualified and experienced individuals. Exposing learners to opportunities to promote creativity and innovation coupled with the development of 21st century skills such as high productivity, inventing thinking, effective communication and digital-age literacy has to receive greater emphasis in the national curriculum, even in deep rural schools. The modern youth have a unique set of characteristics which teachers often acknowledge as being "disruptive". They are generally bored with being the targets of information transfer and would prefer to be actively engaged in the learning process. Introducing computers into the learning environment lends itself to "locking the learners inside the box". The introduction of technologies such as Fischertechnik into the learning environment

from as early an age as possible has the potential to unlock a number of important processes. A significant feature with Fischertechnik is learners being exposed to a re-usable medium to apply their knowledge and test new ideas. A second critical feature is that this technology has the ability to mimic real-world industrial manufacturing processes."

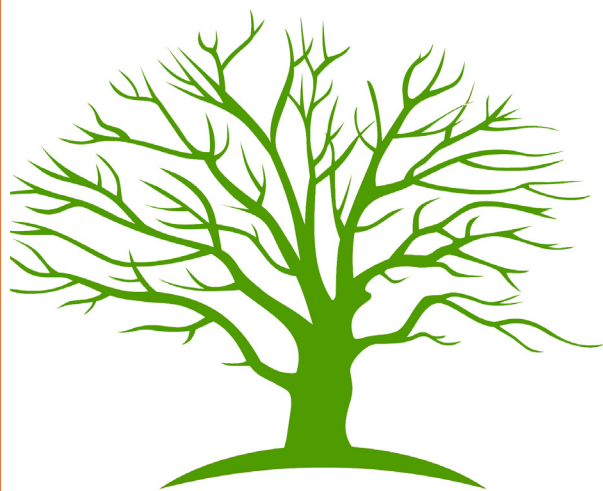
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Initially the profit of their home school business was used for all their extra-mural activities but each child now also started their own investment fund. Although Ilona is not the typical entrepreneurial type, this endeavour is feasible for her as she is carried and inspired daily by her children's passion, perseverance and exciting ideas. She proclaims the winning 'recipe' in education is for parents to be out of the way so that their kids can discover their limitations and horizons. Ilona says that it is like clear fountain water flowing when children learn so spontaneously and share their fresh, uncontaminated ideas.

I experienced one of the Greeff-workshops first-hand in Clarens with a group of 4-7 year olds with their fathers in Clarens. As I witnessed the way in which the family worked together I was reminded of an article I read by Terry Heick – "And if you are called to music or farming or carpentry or healing, if you make your living by your calling, if you use your skills well and to a good purpose and therefore are happy or satisfied in your work, why should you necessarily do less of it?" (The Purpose of School, 2015).

The Greeff family present workshops country wide with the main aim to stir a fresh love for the wonders of technology, science and applied science. It is their hope to also inspire other families to start their own family businesses. Contact Johan and Ilona Greeff 082 376 0394, Ilona.greeff@me.com and www.fischertechnik.co.za

Martie du Plessis give guidance to families about alternative education, mostly home education. Martie explains to parents how to find the learning pathway for each child to enable the child to be a job creator rather than a job seeker. When parents have more time with their children, they can live a more value based life.



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