

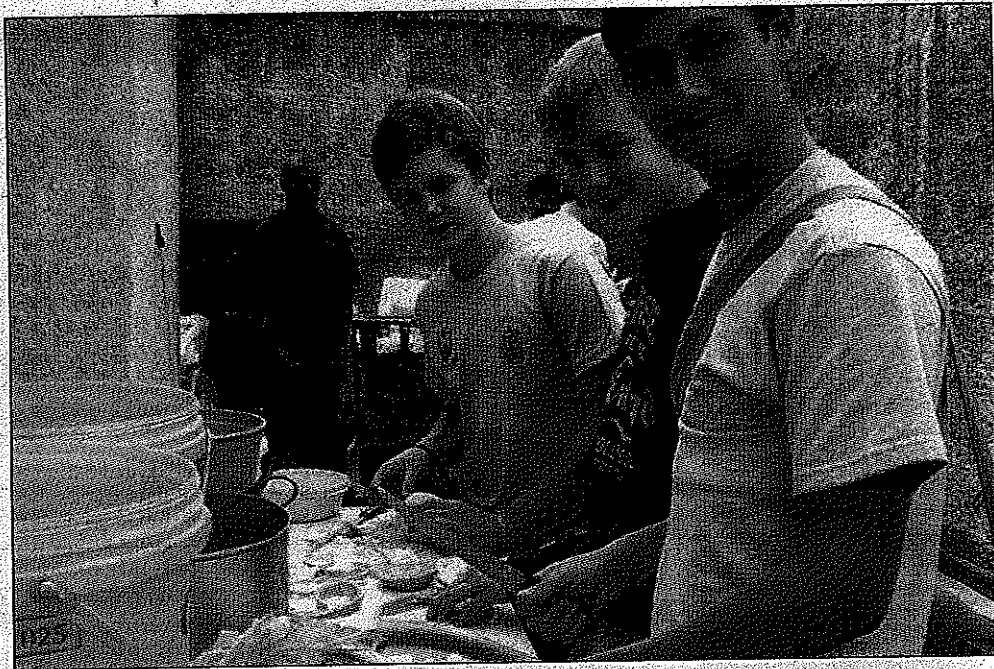
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Ben Beart (front), Mathew Morgan and Bruno Mackay part of a touring group from Wellington College, England, peeling vegetables at Sangesonke Soup Kitchen near the Red location township on their recent visit to Port Elizabeth's townships.

Picture: Brian Booysen

Boys get to know a 'New' Brighton

BRIAN BOOYSEN

A group of 38 British students from Wellington College in Surrey, South London recently discovered what life was about in the townships in South Africa.

The enthusiastic boys, most on their first trip to SA, are part of a group that sponsor the PE-based Oliver foundation which help the needy in the form of vegetable gardens, arts and craft centres and soup kitchens. The foundation is also instrumental in sending over 200 underprivileged children to school.

The teenage students, who arrived in PE recently, will spend the next month seeing first hand the difference their contributions have made to the local community.

Wellington teacher Adam Sedis, who is accompanying the students on their trip, says watching videos does not give a true indication of poverty in the community.

"Getting the boys out in the township to breathe, feel and see what those less-privileged experience everyday, could help them better understand what they are supporting and how important it is to carry on supporting these initiatives."

Although a tour had been on the cards for some time, project director, Gail Hawes, says she is delighted that the foundation's sponsors finally travelled to the township to see the changes their contributions make to the lives of PE's poor.

Hawes is the brainchild of the initiative in the townships.

"The tour builds the character of the boys and instills values to equip them with a different take on the world," she said.

During a tour of New Brighton and the Red Location the group visited a beer hall that was previously used as a "blacks only" drinking

venue. It has been transformed into a gym which produced the International Federation of Body Building, bantamweight body-building champion, Unathi Kawa.

"The gym has helped to turn the attentions of children and young adults from drugs and alcohol to something positive. It has been a second home for many of us," said Kawa.

Project facilitator, Robert Hawes, says their next aim is to add a change-room and provide electricity in the building.

The group also visited the Sangesonke soup kitchen in New Brighton. It is run by Lindelwa Mathambeka who has been in charge for the past 18 months.

Famous in the township for her *amagwinya* (vetkoek) she helps feed a number of needy township people twice a week.

"It fills my soul knowing that I can help someone go to bed with a full stomach," said Mathambeka.

The boys got their hands dirty in Mathambeka's kitchen peeling potatoes and butternuts preparing for the next group which will be collecting food later in the day.

They then got to taste townships delicacies – tripe, *umlegwa* (free-range chicken) and *umvubo* (African salad) – at the abandoned Arthur Nyobe primary school in New Brighton. Judging by the expression on the faces of the youngsters they were not finding it easy to get accustomed to the new fare.

No one knows why the school was abandoned but the Oliver Foundation has tried to turn the building into a hub of creativity with the help of the Wellington funds.

Gail says maths, English, and arts and crafts classes are already on offer but this would not exist without the community's involvement as well as much needed funds from donors like the Wellington College.



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