

Streetscapes News



Director's Corner: Shaping Our Vision

I recently came across an impactful video clip of Barack Obama discussing the importance of 'getting things done' that deeply resonated with me. Since 2015, Streetscapes' journey has been one of consistent growth. What's captivating is that our success isn't just about resources or expertise.

While our outstanding team and planning are important, our true strength lies in our determination to execute tasks. No task is too small, our success often lies in the details. This approach has paved our path to success.

In this newsletter edition, I invite you to explore some of the behind-the-scenes details that led to various achievements. Thank you for your continued support,

Jesse

Innovative Living – Our New Building Project

At Streetscapes, our core values revolve around sustainability, social enterprise, and empowering those in need. Our philosophy rests on giving a hand up, not a handout, ensuring lasting impact

With a growing demand for housing and the need for additional help on our farm, we've embarked on an exciting journey. Teaming up with the Natural Homes Group, experts in carbon-negative construction, and NES Consult and Associates, we're crafting more than just housing – it's a thriving community centered concept that sets the stage for future endeavors.

Set on our Kuilsriver farm, this double-story modular and relocatable building system is set to house 14 rooms, adjacent to our fruit and vegetable gardens. The ground floor will host communal facilities, storage rooms, and meeting areas, powered by a solar battery and inverter room.

Alongside the 14 off-grid apartments, a sustainable self-treatment wastewater Dewdrop and EcSan faecal treatment system, as well as a solid waste sorting system, further enhance the dormitory's eco-friendly profile.



Mobile Toilets in CBD Transform Lives

In Cape Town's buzzy city centre, the ease of finding a nearby restroom is often taken for granted – that is until you actually find yourself in need of one. With only four public ablution blocks across the expanse of the CBD, accessibility to facilities is a challenge.

This changed in May 2023 when the Cape Town Central City Improvement District (CCID) introduced two new mobile toilets to the area. Teaming up with Streetscapes, the CCID not only provided a crucial service but also created employment opportunities, offering Streetscapes clients a new pathway to reintegration in the workforce.



Rhameez, now an area manager for the project, shares his perspective: "I saw it as an opportunity to gain experience and earn a proper income." After 4.5 years with Streetscapes and 2.5 of those free from substance abuse, Rhameez was ready for this challenge.



Rhameez Carves a Different Path

Just 4.5 years ago, Rhameez found himself living in Van Riebeeck Park, grappling with the aftermath of a traumatic experience that led him down a path of substances. This life on the streets stood in stark contrast to his former days as a skilled carpenter running his own furniture business.

Initially, his journey with Streetscapes was met with challenges, as is often the case when breaking free from addiction. "At first, Streetscapes wasn't for me because I was still on substances," he explains, recalling his initial resistance. "Because I was working as a carpenter before, money felt too little.

"But this is not the work, this is a programme to work on yourself for better opportunities." It took me a few months to realise what this was about."

Choosing to reclaim his life, Rhameez, alongside his partner, embarked on a path towards sobriety, and for the past 2.5 years, he has been free from substances. From Vredehoek garden, Rhameez' skilled hands led him to maintenance roles.

The turning point came with CCID's town-wide toilet initiative. "I saw it as an opportunity," Rhameez underwent training to ensure smooth operations, overseeing four sites, including Adderley Street. Now, a team of former Streetscapes clients supports him.

Tiwonge Chimbalanga, a transgender woman also known as Aunty TT, understands the significance of such rights all too well. Having faced imprisonment in Malawi where homosexuality is a criminal offence, she sought refuge in South Africa.

With six years of experience with Streetscapes, Aunty TT is now employed by the CCID to keep these facilities clean on a daily basis.

"Finding a job in Cape Town has been difficult. My language is very broken and people don't like to give South African jobs to foreigners," she explains.

Today Aunty TT takes pride in her work and all the self-development she's undergone since joining Streetscapes. "I want to thank Streetscapes for their help to start working. I learned a lot of things. Thank you to Streetscapes for working with LGBTQI and homeless people.

Aunty TT: LGBTQI Icon on a New Cause

For Tiwonge Chimbalanga, who's known to everyone at Streetscapes as Aunty TT, the toilet project represents safety and dignity for all: "There used to be only one toilet. Now these toilets will help the homeless and all genders," she says.

The loss of basic rights is something Aunty TT has experience with. In 2010, she made history by affirming her engagement to partner Steven, in contravention with her home country Malawi's strict anti-homosexuality laws. After enduring a harrowing experience and seeking refuge in South Africa, she found her way to Cape Town.

"I was stabbed and abused, I have scars. I had to run away and come to South Africa." Aunty TT started working at Passop as an office administrator, helping their efforts to support African LGBTI+ asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants, before meeting Jesse at Streetscapes. "I've been with Streetscapes for six years."

Reflecting on the journey that brought her to where she is today, Aunty TT shares, "There have been a lot of challenges in Cape Town, because people from my country would see me and recognise me. They'd call me a lot of names, they stabbed me.

And another issue is language. My language is very broken in South Africa. So it's a problem to get a job.' Indeed, finding employment in South Africa is tough; local jobs are often not offered to foreigners, so Aunty TT is grateful to have secured the position on the toilet project: "I want to thank Streetscapes for their help to start working."

Aunty TT's story is one of resilience and empowerment. She expresses her gratitude: "Streetscapes taught me so much. I got a lot of learning for school and I know everything about cleaning!" Through her involvement with Streetscapes and the CCID toilet project, Aunty TT continues to make her mark, standing tall as an inspiration for change.

Mobile Toilets in CBD Transfrom Lives Continued...



Rhameez echoes Aunty TT's sentiments: "I could write a whole book about everything that I went through on the street," he says. 'But being in Streetscapes reunited me with my family again and gave me opportunities to learn. They've done a lot for us."

Through dedicated teamwork and continuous management, the public toilets have operated smoothly with two toilets added, and the City has taken on the project's financial support. Currently, four toilets have been operational on both Long Street and Green Market Square since July 2023. Eight new staff members, ready to exit the Streetscapes Program, have joined the team too.



Thembi's Gardening Tips

It's time to slowly wake our food garden from its winter nap. Can you believe springtime is nearly here? This season, our focus turns to pruning, which both rejuvenates and tidies up your garden.



What to Prune This Season

Early spring calls for pruning to refresh woody plants and tidy others.

Lavenders, Rosemary, Basil, Marjoram, fruit trees, green peppers, chilli, and other perennial herbs can benefit from this practice.

It is very important to start pruning at the right time for good results. When plants are pruned too early, you are exposing them to the cold heavy rain and might slow down or prevent the new growth. Wet weather will prevent the cut from healing and you might be facing a fungi problem or lose your plant. Likewise, pruning too late stresses plants due to high temperatures and reduced water availability, possibly leading to loss.

What to plant this season

Fill up your food garden with a variety of vegetable seedlings, available at all Streetscapes gardens by mid-September. Look forward to Bush Beans, Lettuce, Beetroot, Cabbage, Radish, Spring onion, Cauliflower, Broccoli, Kale, Spinach, Marigold, Baby marrow, Brinjal, Coriander, Parsley, Thyme, Lavender pots, Chilli, Green pepper, and Tomato.

Creating Beds for Your Food Garden

If you're considering starting a food garden without existing beds, follow these easy steps:

- Soil Preparation: Ensure a healthy crop by adding compost, manure, and mulch to top quality soil. Dig deeply (800mm) for optimal results.
- For Raised Vegetable Beds: Employ a quality potting mix or a 1-part compost to 1-part topsoil ratio for larger beds.
- For Herb Gardens and Containers: Opt for premixed herb or potting mix. Enhance soil structure and water retention with coco peat or sphagnum peat.

Mulching: Benefits and How-To's

Mulching your vegetable garden offers multiple advantages, including weed control and reduced water evaporation. Apply a thick layer to maintain soil moisture, leading to less frequent watering.

Thank you for supporting Streetscapes gardens. Please don't miss our delicious Raw Honey for R110 (500g) or a tray of 36 Large/XL free-range fresh eggs for R105, available at our Roeland Street office & at Kuilsriver. Your continued support is highly appreciated!

If you found this newsletter interesting

Please consider passing it on to anyone you think could appreciate gaining a greater insight into the plight of the homeless, and how everyone can become 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 you can email us at: info@streetscapes.org.za, and we'll do the rest.

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