

# Streetscapes News

## *From Jesse...*



Providing stable housing has been a game-changer for our clients who experience chronic homelessness and substance use disorders. For years, the absence of a secure home hindered their progress to rehabilitation. These individuals, often turned away from shelters, carved out a life on the streets through activities like parking cars or recycling. They didn't view themselves as "homeless", but as part of a street-based community.

Thanks to funding from Comic Relief, we innovated and developed a successful three-phase housing model from 2019-2023.

We now operate facilities that house over 65 clients. Impressively, 78% of our residents have successfully transitioned off the streets and are now self-sustaining.

Our clients highly rate our services, actively participate in community meetings, and affirm that our housing provides the support they need for personal growth.

Our data reveals a significant reduction in substance use among our clients in our housing. But the most crucial aspect is that having a home allows them to stabilize, address past trauma, reconnect with family, and engage in therapies and career planning. Stable housing is the critical first step and gateway to personal transformation for those transitioning off the streets."

*"We are so grateful to many people who regularly make monthly donations to Streetscapes, essential for us in this day and age of budget cuts by donors.*

*Every bit helps, big shout out to Camps Bay Netball Club, for a lovely surprise contribution!*

**Jesse Laitinen**

*Strategic Partnerships  
Khulisa / Streetscapes*



## *A Journey Through Streetscapes Housing*

For Thabo, Chester House has been a safe haven in the early days of his journey from living on the streets to finding a home. Chester House is a Phase 1 housing that helps many of those still using substances, but looking to reduce harm and take steps towards sobriety.

"It's a blessing to be here," Thabo said. "You're not forced to change, but you have the responsibility to make the right decisions." At Chester House, the goal wasn't complete abstinence right away. Residents had social workers to help manage their substance use through personal development plans. The understanding approach gave Thabo time and support.

Across town, Dolan was settling into Phase 2 at the KuilsRiver farm. He had progressed from Chester House, taking bigger strides towards an independent, sober life. "80% of the time here is your own," Dolan explained. "Unless you let your mind take you down dangerous paths."

Working with the farm's chickens and bees keeps Dolan occupied, but the tight-knit community and staff truly shaped his journey. "The people here work with you proficiently...before I knew it, I was already in recovery." Dolan's eyes welled up thinking about his first sober Christmas and New Year's after many substance-filled years. "It's a dream come true."

The next step is YMCA housing - Phase 3 for those ready to live independently with a job. Jennifer had stuck with the program and now worked at the YMCA gardens. "They really put you up to support yourself," she said. "You come in, get that good routine, and it goes according to your wages to get your own place."

Looking back, Jennifer recognized how Streetscapes allows her and her peers to reshape her life at her own pace. "From Chester, to KuilsRiver, to here - each phase gives you time to grow. Their approach isn't judgmental...they work with you as an individual."



As Thabo, Dolan and Jennifer's stories show, Streetscapes' housing provides a gentle succession of phases to reclaim sobriety and independence. Chester House is a respite for reducing harm, Kuilsriver farm builds life skills and community, and YMCA housing prepares residents for self-sufficiency.

The support and staff adapts to each individual, allowing transformation to unfold naturally.



## ***Beyond Housing: Tailored Social Support at Streetscapes***

Social support is the cornerstone of a successful housing transition programme, and at Streetscapes' housing facilities, it takes on a unique and empowering form, adapting to residents' needs at each phase of their journey. This is evident in the stories of Vivien, who supports residents at Chester House and Kuils River (phase two housing), and Yandiswa, the social worker overseeing YMCA clients (final phase housing).

### **Kuilsriver: Building a Foundation for Independence**

At Kuilsriver, the focus is on empowering residents to take charge of their lives. Vivien describes the approach: "We have community members and our clients who run the space.

We do have housing coordinators, but a lot of decisions go back to the community." This collaborative approach fosters a sense of ownership and equips residents with the skills they need to live independently.



## Key features of social support at Kuilsriver:

- Resident-led decision-making through community meetings
- Focus on self-sufficiency through self-catering and financial management.
- Psychosocial support for recovery programs
- Recreational activities to promote well-being.

## YMCA: Stepping Out with Confidence

The YMCA residence offers a more independent living situation, ideal for residents nearing the final phase of their journey. Yandiswa explains, "There's more flexibility. Residents here don't lose their space if they're absent for a few days." This trust acknowledges the residents' growing autonomy and ability to manage their lives.

## Key features of social support at YMCA:

- Increased independence with private rooms and self-catering
- Flexible living arrangements to accommodate couples
- Access to couples counseling for ongoing relationship support
- Incident management through restorative justice meetings, fostering accountability and growth

## A Spectrum of Support Tailored to Individual Needs

Streetscapes recognizes that residents have different needs at each stage of their recovery journey. The social support programs at Kuils River and YMCA reflect this understanding. Kuils River equips residents with the skills and confidence to live independently, while YMCA provides a supportive environment as they transition back into society. This continuum of care ensures that residents receive the exact support they need to achieve lasting success.



## ***Kuilsriver TV Makeover: A "Plek" to Call Home***

The My Plek of Joune team from Via (DSTV Channel 147) came though to our Kuilsriver farm to do-over the main meeting room of the farmhouse.

*Unfortunately, we cannot show you the before and after pictures, as we have to wait until the episode is shown on TV, which will be sometime in May 2024.*

Isabel Barends, the show's host, perfectly captures the essence of the project: "When I arrived at the Kuils River break room, I was relieved the structure was sound. But the dated furniture and overall lack of cheer made it clear this wasn't a place where people could truly relax." Isabel continues, "These residents have worked incredibly hard to turn their lives around. They deserved a space that reflected the hope and dignity they've earned."

The My Plek of Joune team rose to the challenge. While the initial state presented limitations – "furniture looked like it was 50 years old...everything dilapidated," as Isabel describes – the team's creativity and resourcefulness shone through. Working within a single day (with some behind-the-scenes logistical magic!), they completely transformed the break room.

Drawing inspiration from Streetscapes' branding – the familiar pinks and leaf patterns – the team created a color scheme that felt both cohesive and uplifting. New, comfortable furniture replaced the well-worn pieces, while a fixed pool table provided a fun and social focal point.

The space was thoughtfully divided into distinct areas, offering designated zones for relaxing, socializing, and even team meetings. The end result? A fresh, inviting break room that truly reflects the spirit of Streetscapes and the journeys of its residents.

But the impact goes beyond aesthetics. As Isabel shares, "The residents' positive attitude throughout the process was truly inspiring. They were incredibly helpful and enthusiastic, and their stories were a powerful reminder of the transformative power of Streetscapes." This experience wasn't just about a makeover; it was about connection, community, and the joy of witnessing positive change.



## The Honey Festival

The annual Western Cape Bee Association and Honey Festival was held at Lourensford Wine Estate over the weekend of the 15th to 17th of March 2024.

Being part of the association since 2022 we were invited to attend. The festival is open to the public and the venue also happened to be the location for the Cape Epic Cycle race, and we were grateful to have a good attendance of visitors to the honey festival.

The aim of the festival is to promote local Beekeepers and local raw honey. A number of seminars were made available to the associates, and we were able to network and learn from Bee Keepers that have been operating for some time. Some of the talks were indeed very interesting and in particular we enjoyed the topic on the healing properties and wound treatment with honey.

We took a small team of Streetscapes community members, namely Tessa, JP and Dolan from our farm in Kuilsriver to man a stall and we were able to sell honey to the public.

We recently harvested 30kg of honey from our hives and we were so pleased to sell nearly half of our recent harvest at the honey festival. There was also a competition and different categories for Beekeepers, and we were encouraged to start entering local competitions by the Chairman of the Western Cape Bee Association.

It is indeed very rewarding to see our progress from two hives at the end of 2022 to a total of 14 hives now in 2024 and importantly see how this initiative is starting to support the project with skills development, potential job creation and also much needed revenue to support it.

We would like to thank all the customers and visitors that supported us and also the Western Cape Bee Association for inviting us to attend.

