

## Volunteer Report

Freja Lundberg, a Project Trust Volunteer, has recently written an article for Disability Awareness Day. Freja is currently living and working at Helen Bishop Home, a residential home for young people with disabilities, in South Africa. I have included her report as it is an opportunity for the Trustees to learn more about a Project Trust Volunteer's development overseas, through a first hand account.

### Written by Freja, South Africa 2016/17

I am a volunteer at the Helen Bishop Home for children with disabilities in South Africa.

We do all sorts of things here from helping with physiotherapy and hydrotherapy to teaching and horse riding. While Helen Bishop Home does not claim to be perfect, we and the staff do everything we can to give the best quality of life possible to the kids.

It's not always about having jazzy equipment or top of the range wheelchairs, it's about caring and making the most of each child's life within the limitations of the situation they find themselves in. Sometimes it's not about the big things. Sometimes it's just trying to get a child to be able to differentiate between green and blue. Sometimes it's even getting a child to follow a light with their eyes or even just reacting to stimuli. You would not believe how happy just playing music can make some of these kids. What matters is giving them different experiences and a sense of accomplishment.

This is something I have been trying to achieve all year by trying to teach a Deaf and Blind boy with no sense of gravity to feed himself. Through a lot of perseverance, he now doesn't drop the spoon anymore. But he still doesn't consistently make a scooping motion. But I know I am doing the best I can for him to improve his quality of life. Getting to him to feed himself is not something that I can achieve in a year but gets passed on to the next volunteers. I've planted the seeds and it's up to them to water them to get them to grow.

We have to focus on what each child can do to nurture them. For much of their lives they have been judged on what they can't do and are sometimes hidden away for it. So, it's nice to be able to focus on their strengths. We adapt activities to the child so they don't get frustrated at not being able to do something. Painting can be done with a brush, fingers, fists, feet and even noses! It's up to us to teach our host communities about disability as we come from countries where it is relatively understood. I see the damage that is caused from ignorance every day and sometimes it can't be reversed. The home wouldn't have half as many kids if their families had been educated on disability. Teach your communities that disabled is not a dirty word, that things are only embarrassing if you let them be, that a disabled life is worth living. It is up to us to educate so more kids don't have to go through what mine have gone through.

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