

The Kids with two of the main sponsors, Ryan Johnson and Fiona Ayerst.

# Caring for the community

**PETRO ALBERTS**

Environmental organisations are often active in their efforts to wipe out humankind's carbon footprint from the face of mother earth. A new initiative with its beginnings in Mossel Bay now proves that these organisations care as much for our community as they do for our environment.

The three founding sponsors, Oceans Initiative (previously known as SAMPLA), Fiona Ayerst Underwater Photography and Delfino's Restaurant combined their efforts with Agate Children Shelter to alleviate the circumstances of local street children, while at the same time teaching them to care for themselves and their environment.

The initiative kicked off with a Christmas party for the children held at Funland Amusement Park. Sponsors like The Oceans Initiative, Fiona Ayerst Underwater Photography, Delfino's Restaurant, Oystercatcher Trail and Bushitayl Pottery donned their Father Christmas guise to deliver screen printed t-shirts, lucky packets and loads of gaming sets

(for long term use back at the Shelter) to brighten up the lives of these kids, whilst Louw and Pieter Pretorius of Funland Amusement Park kept the kids busy with free rides for the whole day and Struisvogel Butchery kept their tummies full with an ostrich braai as well as doggy bags for their evening meal.

But the event that still has their little bells ringing was a "lolly drop" by Kiwi Ryan Johnson from Oceans Initiative. Ryan explained this Kiwi tradition to the kids before the fun began, ensuring that they learned while they played.

According to Beverly Boer of Agate Children's Shelter, the ideal is to get the street children off the streets and into the shelter so as to get them back into a school system. A soft approach is needed to achieve this.

This is just one of the projects and they plan to have many more of these also with the assistance of George Child Welfare.

To do this the project sponsors created a charity fund to ensure that there will be enough funds available for more projects like

these and to have a better and bigger Christmas party at the end of this year as to involve more street kids and also abused children, who can get counseling at the Agate Children Shelter.

The aim is to establish cooperation between different shelters from surrounding areas to open up a new world to the otherwise restricted lives of street children. This would enable the children to realise that they are not alone.

Fiona Ayerst Underwater Photography together with The Oceans Initiative is ensuring that the kids are getting actively educated about marine life and the environment. Plans for a nursery run by the kids, for the kids are also in the pipeline.

The next big event is an Easter Party and anyone who would like to get involved in this project should contact the project co-ordinator Lezanne at info@sampla.org.

The environment nurtures us, let us join together to look after our children and teach them to care for and respect the environment also.