

# Interact News



## Prayer Points :

- Provision for the vision of the organization to help the students reach their full potentials
- Mentors with the heart to invest in the lives of these young people
- Influence and relationships with people who have the same heart
- Insights and Ideas to reach our program goals

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## South Africa Missions Team 2009



The first interACT Missions Team left New York on April 8 headed to South Africa. After 24 hours, two flights, and a drive to the mountains the team arrived in Grabouw, which is a town 45 minutes from Cape Town. The 11 member team was led by ACT Executive Director Erika Lee, along with Grace Lee, Paul Lee, and Maryknoll Tauro. The rest of team comprised seven high school students from the Antioch Missionary Church youth group in Flushing. These students obeyed the call to spend their entire spring break doing the Lord's

work for ten days in South Africa. And God never disappoints! The team was warmly



**South Africa Team (from L to R) Maria, Grace, Peter, Maryknoll, Hannah, Haeyoung, Paul, Erika, Jacob, Harry, Rachel with Aaron**

welcomed by volunteer coordinators Daz and Lees from the Village of Hope. The two run activities every week for the

kids from the nearby townships (squatter camps) wherein the team got involved. The team was also able to do home visits with families in some of the poorest areas and prayed with them. The team blessed a great number of people with an overflow of donations from the States. (see p.8) The relationships that were formed during this trip are the greatest gifts for team members. We thank you for all your support and prayers that made this trip possible! (see our Team Testimonials p.3)

## "interACT" Launched at the School of Hope, Cape Town

For the 80 students at the School of Hope, it became more than just a regular day at school. The students assembled Friday to hear about the launch of the e-mentoring program "interACT", a pilot project of Active Compassion Trans-

forms. The program aims to provide positive mentoring relationships between the 12th grade students enrolled at the school and young adults living in New York City. The mentors and mentees will log on to a secure online platform and follow a guided curriculum geared toward developing the student's life skills. The end goal is to help

the students gain insight about their own potential. We believe the program will be even more powerful because of its integration into the school's mandatory Life Orientation class (LO) for seniors. The alignment of the two programs will allow the students to (cont'd on p. 2)

## Transformed. By Erika Lee



Erika with the kids living in Grabouw

*“There are few greater gifts than to witness and experience the courage, passion, selflessness, brokenness, and joy that I saw in the connections between our team and the many people we met”.*

Every time I read each contributor’s paragraph in this newsletter, I cry...tears of joy and gratitude. I am amazed at how God, in less than a year, has now grown ACT from a fuzzy idea into an organization with support and activity from individuals all over this country. It is simply phenomenal to me how the grace of God knows no bounds. Trusting God in starting ACT despite the economic circumstances and leading this trip have taught me countless lessons in perseverance, leadership, and obedience. I wouldn’t have it any other way!

God gave me the extra special blessing of celebrating my 27th birthday in South Africa. The day was filled with surprises, fun, love, and gifts that reminded me again and again how rich He has made me in relationships. There are few greater gifts than to witness and experience the courage, passion, selflessness, brokenness, and joy that I saw in the connections between our team and the many people we met. It was life in action; the vision of ACT made real. Each person simply gave of who they are, whatever they have to offer, and the love and joy of the Lord abounded. What’s even more amazing is God showed me...the *love* I felt hugging each of the SOH students again, the *joy* and *pride* I felt seeing them a grade higher than last year, the *brokenness* I felt holding the hands of the HIV+ mothers and babies that I prayed for in those tin shacks...was ONLY a taste, a fraction of the depth and intensity of God’s love for us and His desire to see us living our best lives!

It’s given me the courage to come back with even bigger dreams for ACT and for myself, dreams that scare me because they can’t be achieved without God. And it leaves me wanting more of Him... We’ve shared our stories, because that’s our hope for you...

## interACT Launch cont’d...

apply and discuss what they are learning in the classroom, which reinforces and enhances their overall learning experience! ACT donated three computers and set them up at the school mainly for the program’s use. The students received the launch of interACT with enthusiasm and took the initiative to complete the

lengthy application process in the hectic 4 days we were at the school. The entire grade 12 class voluntarily enrolled in the program, completed assessment surveys, essays, orientation and training, in addition to 30-45 minute one on one interviews with us. Maryknoll, Kristy, and I can truly testify to God's grace and provision in the week's accomplishments,

given the many surprises and obstacles that came our way! The curiosity, support, and enthusiasm of the staff and students was overwhelming; in addition, many of the underclassmen and teachers wanted to be connected to New Yorkers. We believe that God will continue to work and expand this program. This is only the beginning, so stay tuned!



12th grade students at School of Hope

# Changed. South Africa Team Testimonials



**Dawood, (grd.12) with Maria, Hannah and Rachel**

all. I loved helping out, praying for them, and even giving them a simple hug because those things made them so happy. They taught me what faith really means. No matter what they go through they still have hope in God. I realize that it's not the works I did for them but the purpose that makes it so

great. Thank you for the people who prayed for us, your prayers really did help because God was with us all the way. Thank you especially to the people who supported me to go, without you I could've missed this great experience. I'm truly grateful; I know God will bless you so much.

**-Hannah Tran, 13**

South Africa was nothing like I imagined it to be. What I saw at SA was far beyond my

*" They taught me what faith really means...I realized that it's not the works I did for them but the purpose that makes it so great."*

imaginations. The royal blue beaches, rocky mountains, beautiful animals, everything. However, none of that compares to the relationships I've made with the amazing people over there. To those who stand in prayer with me, let us not forget how wide our eyes were opened, how much our hearts were filled, and how great the Lord is, to have mercy on us. People under horrible situations know how to smile when tide's high. By

horrible situations, I'm not just talking about their tin shacks, or lack of food. I'm talking about each and every day of their lives, becoming a life or death struggle. Now the students at the School of Hope, boy! does God have amazing children or WHAT. With arms open wide, they took us all in. They are so friendly, comforting, and charming in their own way. The bonds we have, the connections that were established

is all so miraculous to me. Their life stories, their aspirations and future goals motivate me to not only to live a life of loving, but to live a life of giving. They gave me love, truth, courage, determination, admiration, and so much more. That alone is above all things in this world. I am so glad to be a part of this generational spark ready to be set on fire. Although I'm back in NY now and my surroundings are still the same, the seed

planted within me will not stay calm. The mission has only just begun since we landed home. Alas! It's finally our time to be the history makers!  
**-Rachel Kim, 15**

Africa was a blessing, not because of all the fun I had there but because of the family that I made there. Each and every student at School Of Hope made me feel home. However, the one man I met there who changed my life,

Safwat Thompson, although when we first met it was very awkward, and I was unsure of what to say, Safwat and me ended up becoming the greatest of friends, and brothers who got to know each other. Safwat lives a hard life with a huge family (by huge I mean over 10 members) in one small apartment with 2 bathrooms, and he still perseveres through it all. Safwat taught me that when you keep to

your goals and dreams, anything's possible. What I learned from Safwat was the greatest blessing I could've received. **- Peter Hwang, 15**

South Africa was a great experience for me. The poverty made me sad to witness how they're living. We got to pray for people and donate clothes and food. But what was very



**Peter hugging a kid from Grabouw**

## Team testimonials cont'd...



Bonding with the grade 12 students during mentoring day

*"God totally broke my heart for the poor, and my tear faucet tend to fling open whenever I'd talk about the families I met"*



Maria Bae with one of the students from School of Hope

important was our love we gave to them. Working with the nurses was great. I was very touched how these nurses are willing to help people, when they're in the same situation also. I got blessed especially when I was praising with them because all of a sudden they started to sing in African. I didn't know what they were saying but I understood, in that mo-

mother. so I grabbed Grace teacher and Erika teacher with me, since I was afraid to pray for him alone. We all held hands. I didn't feel so connected with God like that for a long time. That prayer that I prayed for the student's sake was from the bottom of my heart. I really meant every word I prayed. When we were done praying, the boy said thank you, and wiped a tear

made me uncomfortable). I am so thankful for meeting those five families, because it has changed my life and gave me a clearer purpose and incredible freedom. Now I see my purpose much clearer in the current NYC corporate job and the earnings power, to actively help those in need. And ah, this freedom to live by the king-

dom rules, and not be limited or dependent on what's going on around me! I hope this makes sense. There is much more I wish I can to share with you - if you're in town and want to get a cup of coffee, please let me know. Friend, you are a world-changer! – **Grace Lee**

ment it was just amazing. **-Harry Pak, 15**  
I never thought God would use me in such a way there as He did. When we were working with the School Of Hope students, there was a student probably a year older than me that came into the classroom I was in. He came in, in the middle of the period (I guess), so he didn't hear the "hello,

from his face with his scarf. I will never forget him, because at that moment, because of his faith in God I felt that, God really answered my prayers. If I didn't go to Africa and just stayed in New York living my life, I would've never seen how God would use me in this world. **-Maria Bae, 16**

I think God began to work in my own heart even from the airplane ride as I

sat next to a Brazilian woman named Elaine and hear about her work experiences helping HIV+ patients in poor areas. In the town of Grabouw, South Africa, God totally broke my heart for the poor, and my tear faucet tend to fling open whenever I'd talk about the families I met. You know, now I can relate to Brooke Fraser's-song *Albertine* (before, I'd skip the song because it

and amazing experience for me. I was able to interact with the people in the neighborhood around the place I stayed. I joined a kids club where a bunch of kids from the neighborhood come to play together and I was able to pray for the poor and the sick. They lived in shacks which was like a tree house and some of them were sick to point

everyone, my name is Maria Bae" speech. I really didn't think too much about him after he came into the room, I was talking to the other students that were there. At the end of class, when everyone had to go home, he came up to me, saying how his mother was sent to the hospital that morning. I didn't know what to do for him. All I could do was pray for him and his

and amazing experience for me. I was able to interact with the people in the neighborhood around the place I stayed. I joined a kids club where a bunch of kids from the neighborhood come to play together and I was able to pray for the poor and the sick. They lived in shacks which was like a tree house and some of them were sick to point

# Changed cont'd...



Grace explaining the Bible verse that came in her Easter egg to the kids from Grabouw

*"I just want to point out the Agape love that touched my heart in south Africa..."*



Jacob, Paul, Harry and Haeyoung with Dawood and Mishqa during the "Identity in Christ" small group

they were dying. This heartbreaking experience opened my eyes to how Africa really is and how we should act now to help them. The kids in the neighborhood have nothing and when we went to them and gave a small portion of what we had their eyes widened and they became so full of joy. Looking at this would give anyone the desire to be able to do so much more

for these kids. I plan to join another mission and not just to Africa but to other places. I will always pray for the people I met over there and I will never forget them. I thank those who supported me because without your help I would not have been able to grow from this experience. **-Jacob Oh, 15**

I have heard and seen many

mission trips and what the Lord has done in those missions for those people that went, but it must be so true that God wants to have a personal transformation because I have never felt this broken and excited before in my life. God showed our mission team that there is nothing out of His control and that He makes all things to work

together for our good! Even though it's going to take me days to write about what the Lord has done in our trip, I just want to point out the Agape love that touched my heart in South Africa. It was the day when we were visiting the poorest town houses in the area and my heart was so nervous not knowing what to expect. There, my heart started to warm up and

witnessing how poor condition they were living in just got me speechless. Something more amazing was that we were accompanied by 2 local nurses (by the way, they do this everyday) who lived in the same neighborhood as those people in needs!!! Who does that? In the moment of lacking so many things, how can you reach out to others to help them? Literally

giving ALL they could offer! Right there at that moment, I prayed to God that this feelings that I've obtained, the scars of these people, would remain in me forever. Now I'm back in New York. I see the overflow of God's blessings everywhere that I go. I will start the fund raising and never ending prayers for those people who are willing to carry out the love of Christ to

the people in need. I have a Father who assures me of the restoration in South Africa as long as our heart and prayers never stop burning! Thank you all for planting this seed in my heart by supporting our mission team. God bless.- **Paul Lee**

This experience is something that will feed my spirit and keep me going towards God's kingdom. For those who are not exactly sure of what I mean, I'll simply say that this opportunity meant so much to me and it's done so much in my mind, in my heart, in the way I see things and in my relationship with God. Thank you so much for being part of our team; you've played such a great role and may God bless you and your

families with all He has to offer. Okay so, here's one thing about me: I tend to forget a lot of things. It's even going to take me time to remember what I wore to school today (which was about 7 hours ago). I cannot remember clearly my vacation to Belize in December of 2008, or my weekend in Georgia last month and I surely didn't want that happening with the mission trip in Africa- or with any of the other team -

Before I begin anything, I want to thank y'all from the bottom of my heart.

## Changed cont'd...



**Paul and Haeyoung during one of their home visits**



**(above) Jacob and the power rangers kids from Grabouw (below) Kristy with Shaena one of the grade 12 students.)**



members. Through God's might I didn't- THANK-FULLLLLLLY. What's amazing is how much I miss it, and how much I'm dying to go back. I miss it so much. I loved being surrounded with such hopeful, courageous and strong dreamers at the School of Hope. I loved surrounding the broken-hearted patients with the hope, courage and strength that God has shown me- and offers to everyone else. I loved how I had the power to influence children and let them see a bright, hope-

personal revelations. And it's amazing that in each of them the redemptive plan of God is waiting to unfold. I thank everyone who has blessed us during that trip especially your prayers, that have unlocked the power of God in our team. The awesome thing is, this is just the beginning. The vision has just been planted, and we want you all to be a part it. So we'll keep in touch guys! Watch out for more, for God's glory!—  
**Maryknoll Tauro**

**Your team was amazing, just the way that the group rallied together, got stuck in and most importantly allowed themselves to really get to understand the realities of South African life for many millions of people. They were**

ful, Godly side of life. I thank God everyday for using me to further his kingdom. I thank him for answering my prayers of not forgetting each and every person I got to converse with; not forgetting their stories and what they've been through. And most importantly, I thank him for sending our team relief (that's you guys!)  
**Haeyoung Lim, 15**

In South Africa, God has shown me how personal He really is. He allowed my heart to be broken for a nurse there, who was

servicing her community but at the same time was struggling with a diagnosis of a possible illness. I met a girl who shared her big hopes and dreams despite dealing with the reality of her poverty and a mother lost in alcoholism. And the students we met who were excited to receive acceptance and affirmation. For them to know that their dreams are possible because someone, other than themselves, believe that they can have better lives. There are so much more



**Maryknoll hopping with some of the kids from Grabouw**

My experience in South Africa was above and beyond anything I had expected. I had an opportunity to meet some of the students at the School of Hope and walked away

**a real blessing to us and especially me as I took them out to pray with the most needy people in our little town of Grabouw, the way that they prayed and had empathy for the people we visited was special, and thinking of their**

with a new-found sense of inspiration. This amazing group of students have done so much with so little and yet their dreams and goals aren't shattered by their circumstances or the negativity around them. The goals and aspirations of these students really moved me. It taught me that it doesn't matter where you come from, its about what a person can do with their life under any type of hardships and obstacles that come their way.—  
**Kristy Wong, ACT Volunteer**

**young ages they acted well beyond their years....we miss them lots and wish that they could return someday, maybe as mission team leaders themselves! Bless you all**

**—Tim and the Village of Hope (VOH) Team**

# From South Africa cont'd...



Tim playing with the kids from the Iraq township during the home visits

Erika Lee from New York, and a team of young Koreans, returned to the school to launch a powerful mentorship program with the Grade 12 students. In addition to sharing their time and talent, this team brought with them three fully equipped desktop computers, a digital camera and a suitcase of stationery and various other useful items expressed in our needs list. The gift was given with such enthusiasm and sincerity that it brought tears to the principal's eyes! We truly appreciate Erika's excellent and selfless effort.- School of Hope,

Thembalitsa April newsletter

I really believe that this program is such an opportunity for our learners to really get empowered through the experience of others. When I looked through the material I was so inspired to know that this organization really values and believes in transforming the lives of people. Through talking to the kids I can really see the excitement and enthusiasm to connect with a mentor outside of their normal environment. They can communicate freely and express their concerns especially about their future careers. At the school we believe that hope transforms and this program has the potential to be a vehicle of hope to the learners and even beyond. - Christeline

Carolus, Educator, School of Hope (SOH)



Laura (middle) and the awesome staff of School of Hope

Thank you to the beautiful people from New York, who came to share their lives with us here, in Cape Town South Arica. While they came bearing gifts, it was not the expensive and up market equipment they brought along with them which impressed us, but the heart and

generosity of spirit with which they shared not only their gifts but their lives also. Everything they did and said was of a high quality and transferred with excellence. The students are motivated and inspired to reach even higher and further than before. Thank you for giving

of yourselves, Erika and Team. We will never forget you- Laura and the School of Hope Family

"You guys change my mindset completely showing me anything is possible and now i know i can be-

come what i want to become because they just gave me alot of courage and showed me everyone has a purpose in life no matter where you come from or how good you are everyone has their purpose in life and don't forget 2 tell



The team with some of the grade 12 students from School of Hope at VOH in Grabouw

them i love them and miss them very much"

-Dawood Van Der Fort, grade 12 student, SOH



# Caught in the "ACT"!!!



(above) the unexpected donations we have received !  
(collage) fun times

Don't forget to [visit our website](#) to view more of pictures and videos during our time there!!!

**God knew the great purposes He had for every life touched during this trip and HE truly moved mountains for this team to reach South Africa.**

**Here's our Praise Reports!**

1 week before- last minute switch of one of our team members

1 day before- 2 team members got their passports

Day of departure, airport check

in- we find out the airline had mistakenly canceled 4 of our team members' tickets!

It was a journey to even get on the airplane!! But God made a way and His faithfulness and presence marked our journey throughout.

\*At Village of Hope (VOH) located in Grabouw, where 1/3 of the population is HIV+, we:

Helped with the kids' sports

clubs for the township kids- loved on them, learned and taught games, shared the gospel and gave out NY souvenirs as prizes (i.e. key-chains of the Statue of Liberty or Brooklyn Bridge), gave Easter eggs filled with candy and handwritten Bible verses, taught them some Korean! :)

## Caught in the ACT cont'd...

Led Bible study on dreams for some of the young township children

Conducted two midweek services to encourage and pray for the nurses at Thembacare

Visited homes to deliver hope, love, prayer and hugs, along with the tangible gifts of food and clothing for the neediest; some of families living on the mountainside with no running water or electricity in the 'house

\*For the School of Hope (SOH) students, where many students are taking a second chance on finishing their education, we:

Shared testimonies and NY experiences with each class at the School of Hope; spent the day with the grade 12 students at Cape Point, where we heard many of the students declare their dreams and goals, planned and conducted a mentoring day over Easter weekend at VOH with Identity in Christ workshop

\*Each team member shared what God was revealing to them and led a devotion at least once during the trip

In all of this, we give thanks and praise to God and to our all our friends old and new in South Africa and US, thank you for catching the vision!

SPECIAL THANKS to Adrian of [www.tourismthatcares.org](http://www.tourismthatcares.org) for coordinating the trip, and the teams at SOH and VOH!

## GET INVOLVED!!!



*Give your time .*

Time is just as valuable as money, and volunteering your time for ACT is a priceless gift. You can volunteer your time by sending letters/emails of encouragement to a student, hosting a dinner for the mentees during their trip to New York, and helping to plan or participate in activities to make the best of their time here. Or just tell a friend! By telling friends, family, and co-workers about ACT, you can raise awareness and bring more people to our site so they too can find out how to help.



*Give supplies .*

Computers are a crucial aspect to our program as they provide our means of communication. You or your company can help by supplying the School

of Hope with computers that are current and able to handle the most recent Windows platform and have the capability to be added to a network.

*Give a donation .*

Since ACT's mentorship program is computer based, your donation can go a long way. For instance, \$30 pays for a mentee to be on the iMi platform for a whole year, while \$60 pays for an entire mentor/mentee match for a whole year! Even \$25 is enough to pay for a mentee's Metrocard during their stay in New York.

## Baie Dankie!!! Thank You!!!

We are grateful for the part you have faithfully decided to play in this exciting journey. We believe each person doing their small part adds up to a big difference. God exceeds our expectations and multiplies what we place in His hands! We echo the sentiments, awe, and gratitude expressed by David in *1 Chron 29:14- 'But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.'*

In addition to distributing the fantastic

donations that filled 13 large suitcases from the US and delivering the 3 fully equipped desktop computers donated to SOH for the interACT program, the **\$30,000 raised for the trip** far exceeded our team fundraising goal! This allowed us to equip SOH with a brand new printer and various other computer supplies, purchase additional food parcels for some of the families visited, provide the funds for 6 cots ordered for families that will utilize the new baby unit at VOH and financially bless God's workers so faithfully working in the harvest field. Even more exciting was watching each team member person-

ally give from

their own storehouses- whether they were gifts they specially brought from home, money from their own pockets, or clothing/accessories right off their own bodies.

We invite you to continue giving with us (see 'Get Involved') or to come experience it for yourself as a participant in our **August 14-28, 2009 trip**.

From all of us, we just want to thank all of you for your prayers and support! As we say in Afrikaans, "Baie Dankie!!!

### South Africa Trip :

**August 14-28, 2009**

**email :[Erika@activecompassiontra nsforms.org](mailto:Erika@activecompassiontra nsforms.org) if you're interested.**

## ACTIVE COMPASSION TRANSFORMS

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We are also on: Facebook Causes, Twitter, Multiply

**It's not too late to apply to be a mentor! Please drop us an email anytime!**



## SPOTLIGHT:

Name: Cial James Hendricks

Age: 18

Likes: fishing, cricket, bike rides!

Cial Hendricks is one of the grade 12 students at School of Hope that is currently in the Interact e-mentoring program. Cial was left emotionally scarred after learning that the father he hasn't seen since he was 12 was actually incarcerated. Cial is working on improving his self esteem so he can succeed in his dream of working in IT and live up to his moniker "Bill Gates."



## ACT – Our Story

**“Who am I but only one person who cares?”**



The vision and purpose of Active Compassion Transforms (ACT) comes from the direct answer to a question we ask ourselves in the face of circumstances we wish to change. Erika Lee, the founder and Executive

Director of ACT, asked this very question after spending three powerful weeks in Cape Town, South Africa with the students at the School of Hope during the summer of 2008. In her short time there, she experienced visceral emotions ranging from anger and sorrow to joy and hope as she formed deep bonds with the students. At the heart of what would eventually become ACT was Erika's desire to bridge the chasm-like disparity between the perceived reality of these students and their actual potential.

The students at the School of Hope represent a generation burdened with scars not only from their country's past, but also personal histories, which create serious challenges to the students' present and immediate future. The legacy of apartheid, scourge of AIDS, allure of gangs, and the grip of poverty, homelessness, abuse, and drug addiction are just some of the realities youth face daily. As Erika developed friendships with these students, she recognized the impact that just one healthy, loving, and stable relationship could have in motivating them to stay in school, reach their full potential, and live fulfilling, productive lives to positively impact their communities. From this, the vision and blueprint for the interACT program was birthed. interACT is a curriculum-based, cross-cultural e-mentoring program to connect caring New Yorkers with 12th graders living in the Cape Flats of South Africa.

Erika created ACT realizing that there are others who share her passion for impacting youth, and through collective efforts, lives could be changed. ACT is a young organization looking to grow into its own full potential to succeed in its mission. ACT is predicated on the idea that the relationships we have are what cause us to thrive – and it's in the power and health of these relationships that we attempt the impossible and we become our best. We invite you to be a part of that journey, whether as a mentor, volunteer, or donor – **YOU can ACT**.

### **Embrace.Engage.Empower.**



ACT is a nonprofit corporation registered in New York State. We are currently in partnership with Good Neighbor Foundation, a 501(c)3 organization, whilst awaiting our tax-exempt status from the IRS. All contributions to ACT, via Good Neighbor, are tax deductible to the extent provided by law. EIN # 62-1854502

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR DONORS and VOLUNTEERS! **From the Board of Directors**

ERIKA LEE, CAROL LIU, MICHAEL HARRIS, MARYKNOLL TAURO