



BELLAVISTA

# NEWSLETTER

A S A F E H A R B O U R S C H O O L

4 December 2023

## Still standing and other lessons from sunflowers and the children at Bellavista School

Sunflowers are celebrated for their radiance. At school, we started the term with 'gorilla planting', each child receiving a small bag of sunflowers seeds to hurl onto random ground across Johannesburg. Before we set about spreading some brightness at a time that felt anything but cheerful, we considered some of the characteristics of these bright blooms.

Firstly, their towering stature, often reaching heights of up to two metres, commanding any observer's attention. They stand bold and unashamed. Secondly, the vibrant yellow petals flamboyantly surrounding the brown central disc create a striking visual contrast, symbolising warmth and positivity. These flowers can be as wide as thirty centimetres across the diameter. Additionally, sunflowers are known for heliotropism, a unique ability to *follow the sun* across the sky.

They are not soft nor fragile. Their robust stems and coarse leaves convey strength and durability, making them resilient in various environmental conditions. Sunflowers also attract pollinators, playing a crucial role in ecological diversity. Finally, their seeds, arranged at the flower's centre, are a rich source of nutrients and are cultivated for various culinary and nutritional purposes.

While sunflowers are generally resilient, they can be vulnerable to various factors that may impact their growth and survival. Excessive moisture can lead to root rot. Prolonged exposure to frost, especially during sensitive growth stages, can also be detrimental. Additionally, certain pests like aphids and caterpillars and pathogens like mildew and rust diseases may pose a threat and can cause a decline of sunflower health. In my case study of a vase of sunflowers while convalescing recently, I could not identify root rot, frost or pests. However, unnaturally, the flowers were in a vase without their usual environmental inputs. There was light, but not direct sunlight. They cheered me up for a week, and then fell over. One solitary stem reminded me that it is possible that even when under duress, I could be that sunflower still standing. It endured two more weeks, radiant and proud.

And so it is for you, *you are still standing*. Standing despite a(nother) hard year. Standing despite uncertainty, pressures, anxieties and loss. You are *standing* because you are resilient



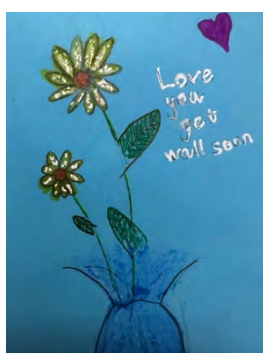
Fig1 Mrs Scott's sunflower case study



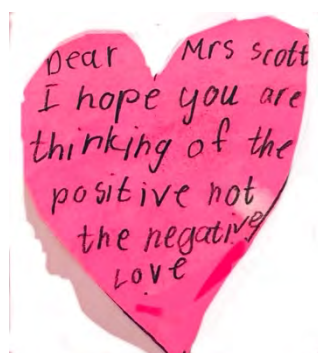
like this extraordinary flower. Resilient, strong, outward looking, determined to find optimism. *You are standing* because, like sunflowers, you are waiting for the sun to rise again. And it will.

And so it is for your child. *Standing* despite the harsh realities of broad educational system. *Standing* with resilience although the pressures and frustrations of learning disabilities can loom. Commanding attention and embracing their strengths and weaknesses unashamedly. *Standing* for their values, from home and at school. *Standing* up for others with warmth and positivity. *Standing* as a source of encouragement and making society richer.

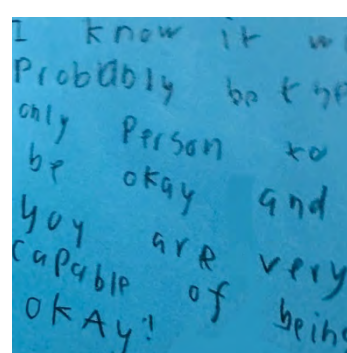
I don't know where all our seeds landed earlier this term, but I do know that the community of Bellavista School is a field of sunflowers, and it has impacted me personally in the period. To encourage me in my post op recovery, the children wrote cards, each touching and kind. The unelicited themes- grit; positivity; love; and care. Ten year olds turned my face to the sun. And I'm still standing.



Love



Positive Mindset



Grit

### Appreciation

I returned to light duties last week and expect to be at school for the final assemblies that celebrate each of the most important people, the children.

My heartfelt appreciation is extended to the Management Committee of the school, Mrs Allan, Ms Davis, Mrs Archer and Mrs Jacquet, as well as Theresa Garden, my right hand, for ensuring that the school was so well cared for in my extended absence.

I thank the staff who carried on doing what they do best. I am also grateful to each member of the Parents Association, under the leadership of Mrs Kerry Harrison, for supporting and building the parent body throughout this year. They have been sowing seeds, nurturing green shoots of community, and creating magical memories throughout the year, the Bellavista BASH and the Neon DASH amongst them.

My thanks is also extended to Mr William Marshall, the Chairman of the Board, and all fellow members of the Board of Governors. We conclude another year looking in the rearview mirror to see our growth – solar installations to meet our power needs, a new middle school well



under construction, an ever expanding capacity at Bellavista SHARE to impart our knowledge to others, and a stable financial position. Moreso, looking forward, the vision is bright for the children at this school as these governors faithfully guard the ethos and care for all they serve and protect.

And to parents, as you thank teachers, therapists and all the supporting staff who have held and guided your child, I in turn *thank you* for standing together as we work towards their brighter future.

To the Bellavista Team

One only has to go to a Bellavista assembly to realise what the school embodies and its values. Every Friday children get called up for various reasons they receive certificates, high fives or credit badges. What for: Perseverance , participation, improvement, self-regulation and kindness. These accolades are achieved by being the best person you can be. It' s what one has achieved in one' s own capacity that is awarded. Isn' t that the race in life that we should be running? The best that I can be.

The children all high five or congratulate the child that won the award. The ability of being happy for other people is indicative of one' s own strength of character. It is the ability to think beyond our problems and celebrate other people' s achievements. This is a difficult task . But these beautiful children have been taught this character trait. Nate one day came home from school. He told me that during sport one of the kids was struggling to finish a lap . He was excited not because he won the race. But because they were all cheering for the boy who was struggling to finish the race. The children all started running with him to help him finish the race. That is the picture we see after the comrades marathon. Many runners help those that are unable to cross the finish lines. A runner is flanked by two runners on either side helping him reach his goal. We see adults in those pictures. Our children are learning those lessons. There' s a Jewish term called neshoma. It means soul. It cannot be explained in a physical way but rather metaphysical. When you walk into Bellavista you don' t see it' s soul, you feel it. Trevor, Max and Vincent welcome you and your kids everyday by name, with a smile and a positive energy. One cannot help but appreciate and smile at that greeting first thing in the morning. Not only has Bellavista given our child the tools and confidence he needed. But they have given the family the support and tools that we needed on this journey. Thank you for helping Nate see that there is no such thing as perfection but continued growth. That a mistake or a wrong answer does not mean the world will crumble. But an opportunity to learn. For learning to self-reflect, dig deep and know that he is enough. For listening to our bodies and finding ways to self-regulate. The other night I heard my husband say to the excited dogs "you need to self-regulate" Nate and the Herrs leave Bellavista with a heart full of love and gratitude. God has really blessed Nate that he had this opportunity to attend the best school in the world. On behalf the Herr family and Nate . A thank you will never be enough. Because no words can describe our appreciation for all that you have given Nate. The understanding, patience, confidence and time that every child deserves. Thank you thank you. All our love Craig, Kim, Nate and Jax Herr





16 November 2023

Mrs. Scott,

*I am thrilled to tell you that today marked my last day at Wits, and I am officially an engineer! I cannot thank you and the Bellavista team enough for nurturing, supporting, and believing in me!  
I take great pride in being a Bellavista alumni .*

Josh Trope

23 November 2023

Dear Mrs Scott

*Well, our son has just headed off to write his final Exam of Grade 12, English Paper 2. What a journey this has been and we could not be more proud of the young man he has become and the commitment, self-discipline and determination he has developed and revealed to us all. It really makes me think back to where this journey really started. Eight years ago, we had very mixed and confused emotions about our son starting with Bellavista. I remember sitting in that first assembly of the year, thinking why here, why our son and why us? We could not understand what was happening and what was wrong. I know that I was really struggling to hold back from bursting out crying.*

*In no time, we started getting into the school rhythm and routines at Bellavista and knew we were in good hands. Exceptional hands. The three years our son spent at Bellavista were perhaps the best time of his life, and ours. He was carefree, having fun and being fulfilled. But behind that, there was a lot of work to get to the heart of where he was facing difficulties in class. He began an incredible journey of self-reflection, self-awareness and grew acutely aware of where he had had challenges and was helped to find the tools to overcome these. He knew that he may have to work a bit harder than others to keep up, but that was ok. It taught him the rewards of self-discipline and determination. And grit. And he developed some major super-powers along the way, through facing and taking on his own challenges. He is highly emotionally intelligent and empathetic towards others and will defend and pick up anyone who is brought or put down. The picture [you see] in the attached, is a self-confident, self-aware and successful young man about to enter adult life beyond school, and we are confident that he is well-prepared and ready. Ok, some things have still slipped through the cracks and there are a few things like making food, cleaning up after himself and planning and organizing which still need some work. But he'll get there.*

*We owe so much to Bellavista, it's amazing Principal and the many incredible teachers who helped our son prepare for high school and then for life after that. We will be forever grateful. For parents about to embark on the process we are now completing, believe in the process. It is going to be ok. More than ok, their children are blessed to have this hand up, to build their belief in themselves and to learn how to overcome and thrive. That has been our son's story.*

*Our son's matric results only come out on 18<sup>th</sup> January. He has already been accepted into a number of universities in SA and Australia, in the health sciences, and it looks like we will be heading off across the Indian ocean next year. Mum has already been working there for several months, setting up home and a base and we hope that he chooses to take the opportunity we have worked hard to offer him. We know he will do well with his results but also the results don't really matter that much anymore. He gave it his all and left nothing on the table. We cannot possibly have asked for more. Much of that grit and determination was planted and rooted at Bellavista and we just had to then nurture it and let it flourish. Sometimes, we even had to prune it a bit! We will be eternally grateful to you, his Bellavista school teachers, his classmates and the community who truly helped him to figure things out and then set him off on a course where he could then navigate himself. His teachers gave us feedback saying our son has been the most disciplined and motivated student he has ever taught. That is not something said lightly and I truly believe that trait came from his time with his time with you.*



## Nuts and Bolts

### Assemblies

Please be reminded that all parents are invited to attend our two final assemblies, the GrR-3 on 5 December and Gr4-7 on 6 December. Both start at 08h00. We do not identify prizewinner parents specifically. The events are to *collectively* clap for all our children. We will say farewell to leavers and the Grade Sevens and hear their last ring of the bell before they start their new adventures.



### 2024 Critical Administration

By popular demand, we have consolidated all your annual administration into one single process, using the technology available (personal detail updates, medical forms, fee payment options etc.). Please hop onto the **Edana** app to ensure yours is all up to date before the end of this week.

No Edana app? You are missing out on easy access to key information! Please download it today: [Android link](#) and [Apple IOS link](#)

### Parent Orientation in the new year

As we return in January, just ahead of the children coming on the 17<sup>th</sup>, the class teacher will set up your class or grade Whatsapp group.

On the first Monday evening, we will meet as a whole parent body in the hall (this year with the joy of solar power supply) and then break to respective classes. Please diarise 22 January 2024 at 17h30.

22  
January  
2024  
17h30

### Uniform Shop

The uniform shop will open on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024 for any last minute needs.

### School Leaver's reports

If your child is leaving Bellavista School this week, please note the following important information related to your reports and other essential documentation:

1. The *Academic Progress Term Three Report* is available via the EdAdana Parent Portal as usual. In January, you will no longer have access to this portal, so please do be sure to download it this side of the new year.
2. Your child's *School Leaver's Report* and *Transfer Card* will be shared with you as a link on the Google Drive after Final Assembly on Wednesday. Please download the pdf documents and present these to your child's new school per email or hard copy in the new term. Please do not forward the school the link, as the recipient will not have permissions to access the folder. Please note, at the end of January, the link will expire.
3. If you have any queries or concerns, please do email [ITC@bellavista.org.za](mailto:ITC@bellavista.org.za) and Zayd Jardien can assist you.



### Staff news

Congratulations to Mrs Amy Raines and her family on the birth of baby Anna Catherine Raines. Mum and baby are doing well. We welcome Mrs Tamara Victor (OT) and Mrs Romy Saunders (OT) back from maternity leave. It is with appreciation, and in acknowledgement of all that these staff leaving have brought to Bellavista in their time here, that I say farewell to Mrs Shakira Mohamed (locum OT), Mrs Kimberlee Brown (Locum SLT) Mrs Karen Lamprecht (Grade Five), Mrs Tracey Moyo (Grade R), Leila Voget (Reception) and Mr Luke Auret (Grade Six).



I also wish Mrs Beverley Nowikow who retires to the Western Cape special blessing. Beverley has served Bellavista School for more than fifteen years. Under her capable care and professional hands, many children have flourished. She has directed concerts, adjudicated the Bellavista Stars, captivated us with storytelling on many occasions, even starring as Cinderella's step mother in a staff rendition of Roald Dahl's version on the tale. Beverley transitions children easily from Foundation Phase to Grade Four, promoting them onwards with skills but also *confidence*. I applaud her life-long career in education, building the country's future.

### Calendar 2024

School starts on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at 07h40. The *Bellavista School App* and the *Edana Parent App* will shortly reflect key dates for your diary. For the year's term dates, please see the school website: <https://bellavista.org.za/calendar-2/>

Travel safely and take good rest,

**Alison Scott**  
Executive Principal



## Advertisements



**MUSICAL THEATRE  
HOLIDAY WORKSHOP**

11 - 16 December

**SING! DANCE! ACT!**

**AND PERFORM ON STAGE AT  
THEATRE ON THE SQUARE**

6-8yrs, 9-12yrs, 13-16yrs  
Pridwin Preparatory School,  
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