



Commitment

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From Township to Financial Center

The organization clouddog gives disadvantaged children from London and Johannesburg a kick start for the future through an unusual mix of natural experience and personalized mentoring.

Johannes Mashele, a 17-year-old South African, takes part in clouddog's one-year program aimed at young people from disadvantaged families.



On 7th Avenue in the Alexandra township, South Africa's past and its future live side by side. When Nelson Mandela first came to the economic hub of Johannesburg as a young man in the 1940s, his first house was at one end of this street. A small museum keeps the memory of his time here alive. When Mandela became the country's first democratically elected president in 1994, discrimination against the black population was made illegal. Yet the legacy of decades of inequality is still an omnipresent feature of South African society.

At the other end of 7th Avenue lives 17-year-old Johannes Mashele. His home is at the end of a narrow, barely shoulder-wide alleyway, directly behind an open-air sanitary block shared by six families. Still at school, Johannes lives with his parents and older brother in an area measuring some 20 square meters (24 square yards). His mother was a cashier in a supermarket until six years ago, when she lost her sight. His father is in and out of work. He is currently employed by a company that puts up fences. Johannes' parents are caring, loving people. They avoid spending money on themselves in order to enable their children to have a better future. And Johannes' chances of accessing a prosperous future would certainly be slight without outside help.

The Credit Suisse office in South Africa is just a few kilometers away from the Alexandra township in Sandton, Johannesburg's business and financial center. When Johannes steps inside the modern, functional building for the first time, from where he can see the outstretched lawns of a country club,

he excitedly says: "I've never seen so many flashing trading screens at once!"

A Year Full of Impressions

Together with five other South African and six British schoolchildren, Johannes was selected to take part in a year-long sponsorship program for disadvantaged children. Clouddog is the name of the unusual organization that opens the doors to a brighter future for children aged between 16 and 18 through an innovative combination of natural experience, environmental education and career advice. Mentoring is one element of the sponsorship. Each young person is assigned a personal mentor for a year and has monthly meetings with him or her to exchange experiences. These mentors are volunteers from Credit Suisse's Johannesburg office, and span across the businesses that make up the bank's presence in South Africa.

Johannes' mentor is Mark Wadley, a research analyst in the Equity Research department. He welcomes Johannes initially by taking him on a tour of the Credit Suisse building. When Johannes tells Mark that he is most interested in accounting, the mentor sees this as an excellent first step in the career advice process: "My job involves a lot of auditing. I can show you later exactly what I do," he says. A little later, Johannes listens attentively as Mark shows him an income statement on his computer and explains what the information in the document is used for. In the trading room next door, Johannes' eyes light up as he sees up to eight monitors in front of each of some 10 traders. The atmosphere is friendly: Johannes is greeted warmly and his questions are answered patiently.

Passing on Knowledge

During the tour, the pair has their first head-to-head discussion. Johannes says afterwards: "That was really good. Mr Wadley also helped me with my letters." The letters in question relate to another element of the clouddog program: Each student prepares their own project on the environment, right through from planning to execution. Experienced environmental educators are on hand to assist them. Johannes wants to encourage his fellow schoolchildren to recycle batteries properly instead of dumping them carelessly into the nearest stream. The project includes explanations about poisoning and battery-related dangers, as well as >



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01 Johannes Mashele's personal mentor Mark Wadley shows him around the Johannesburg office of Credit Suisse.

02 Personal mentoring, the development of an environmental project and a three-week stay in a nature reserve are all an integral part of the clouddog program.

03 Mark shares his professional knowledge and experience with Johannes during their monthly meetings.

Increasing Self-Confidence Through Mentoring

Clouddog assists students from inner-city backgrounds in South Africa and the UK to develop self-esteem, focus and direction through environmental education and career advice, thereby improving their chances of a better future. One element of this support is the mentoring program, in which Credit Suisse employees take part as corporate volunteers. Each young person receives a personal mentor for a year, with whom they have regular meetings to exchange experiences. Credit Suisse employees in Johannesburg are taking part in the program for the first time this year.

The Credit Suisse EMEA Foundation has been working with clouddog since 2009, supporting the charity's expansion in South Africa, and fully funding 12 students from the UK and South Africa, participating in the year-long program. In 2010, the foundation's funding was leveraged to further expand the programs, effectively doubling the number of participating students from 12 to 24.

> information about collection points. Johannes must now organize the printing of posters, for which he needs to write to a range of printers for assistance.

After the conversation, Mark reports that Johannes has almost no concept of the ways in which different registers are used in different social situations. "He always calls me "Sir," even though I tell him just to call me Mark. But in letters, he addresses completely unknown companies as if they are his school friends." Mark, who has a five-month-old son himself, is looking forward to a year with Johannes. "I hope that I can help him gain insight into the world of work and different jobs," says the former medical doctor, who came to Credit Suisse via an MBA at Cambridge. "I am a middle-class South African: I had privileges – I went to a private school and then to university. Mentoring is a wonderful way to pass on knowledge and experience."

Experience and Life Support

Clouddog: This poetic neologism is instantly committed to memory, as Teresa Brosnan, the organization's founder, discovered when – many years ago – she was reading about an artist who was talking about the first time his son saw a sheep. The child, who had grown up in a city, had said: "Look, a clouddog!" He was familiar with clouds and dogs, but not sheep. "This anecdote summarizes for me the wonder of childhood, the uninhibited creativity of youth," says Brosnan. Three years ago, Brosnan gave up her job as a senior executive at J.P. Morgan in London to devote all her time to her idea of helping young people from disadvantaged inner-city areas to unlock the doors to a brighter world; the idea of turning them into confident, target-oriented young adults, who dare to hope and to aim big.

For the young people, a year full of new experiences lies ahead. One of the most intensive phases will be the three-week immersion component consisting of high-level conservation and community-based volunteering: The six schoolchildren from South Africa will join their clouddog counterparts from London to discover the variety of their world in South Africa's most beautiful nature reserve. Under the leadership of an experienced guide, they will learn to show commitment through stamina, ingenuity and respect for their environment on so-called walking safaris: today in the wild, tomorrow in life. ■