

## **Interface National Co-ordinating Committee Chairperson's Report:**

**1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 - 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009.**

**Dan Ngcobo**

### **Thank you to the NCC**

I would like to thank every single member of the national co-ordinating committee for their support during the year and for keeping Interface S.A. alive during a difficult time. NGO's continue to have a precarious existence with far too few resources considering the work to be done. Regular meetings were held via MSN and in between meetings, members of the NCC got on quietly with tasks allocated to them. Desirae Pillay worked very hard during 2008 as the National Co-ordinator and she has been sorely missed in 2009 when she was needed to care for her daughter following a huge operation. Special mention also needs to be made of Kerstin Tonsing who has served as editor of the combined National Interface and CAAC newsletter. The editorials have been excellent and inspiring and we have had very positive feedback on this newsletter. Martin Pistorius has continued to update and look after the website despite his move to the U.K. and marriage to Joanne. Thank you Martin and all the other committee members.

### **2008 Interface SA AGM**

This was held on the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2008 in conjunction with a day's workshop focussed on AAC and children with ASD. The workshop was presented by Margi Lilienfeld and Desirae Pillay and was very well received. Several new members including a couple of Special Schools became members of Interface as a result of the workshop and AGM. Felicity Jonck and the Interface KZN committee are thanked for hosting the AGM and workshop. On the preceding afternoon they organised a matinee afternoon showing the movie *'The Diving Bell and the Butterfly'* with popcorn and coke.

### **Workshops & The AAC Eistedfodd**

Following the AGM workshop Desirae Pillay and Margi Lilienfeld in conjunction with Autism South Africa held a two day workshop titled "From Isolation to Participation" in Johannesburg in October 2008 and this was repeated in early December 2008.

Interface Johannesburg held an amazing initiative at the end of 2008 when they organised an Eistedfodd for children who required AAC. It was an amazing experience.

## **ISAAC SA Chapter**

In April 2008 ISAAC chapter guidelines were sent out with the suggestion that we should investigate working towards the launch of a South African chapter. It was proposed that the timing should be carefully chosen to make maximal use of the 5 for 5 ISAAC option that for every 5 members of a new chapter another 5 members will have their membership sponsored for the first two years. On Friday 10<sup>th</sup> October Dr Mary Blake Huer (the then ISAAC President) came to a meeting hosted by the CAAC and Professor Alant to have preliminary discussions about forming an ISAAC SA chapter. This meeting was well attended by different stakeholders interested in AAC. After the meeting a steering committee was selected to be chaired by Prof. Juan Bornman. This steering committee had its first meeting on the 1st of November 2008 and discussed the feasibility of becoming an ISAAC Chapter. They felt that in principle it was an excellent idea, and that this chapter could go a long way in uniting all the different AAC drives in the country. It would also only be successful with participation from various stakeholders, e.g. vendors / manufacturers, AAC users and parents, professionals and institutions such as schools, rehabilitation centres, other NGO's and Government Departments. The first aim was to establish a database for all those working (or interested) in the AAC field. If it is viable for us to become a chapter, we really need to take steps to realise that goal.

## **October 2008 – ISAAC Awareness Month**

My congratulations to the thirteen South Africans, who use AAC, who entered the “Many Stories One Voice” writing competition. The youngest was Matthew Jonck (8 years) who used PCS symbols for his story the “The Monster named Skweegy”. Their work, along with hundreds of entries from all over the world, were featured on the ISAAC website and on the [www.aacawareness.org](http://www.aacawareness.org) website. My thanks also go to Margi Lilienfeld and Tarryn O’Brien who helped co-ordinate many of the awareness events in libraries and schools nationwide. What was exciting is that other individuals from many areas in South Africa organised their own initiatives to raise awareness during the month. Pretoria based FOFO participants visited the Pretoria CP school impressing educators, therapists and the children with their communicative ability using AAC. Learners from the New Hope School went to Garsfontein Laerskool and other mainstream schools organised “Disabled for a Day” awareness events. Mpumalanga and Northern natal also hosted events.

The thanks of Interface also go to Mark Hudson of Process Litho in Durban who generously donated full colour A2 posters that feature the writing of Sam Byrne and myself. The poster is eye-catching and continues to raise interest in the literacy capabilities of children and adults who use AAC where

it has, or is still being , displayed. Many found their way to Special Schools, rehabilitation centres as well as various municipal, community and school libraries in various parts of South Africa.

### **Good byes**

At the end of 2008 the AAC community in SA said goodbye to Prof Erna Alant who had started and then headed up the CAAC at Pretoria University for 18 years. She left for the snow of Indiana University, Bloomington, USA. We continue to have ties with the CAAC under the current leadership of Prof. Juan Bornman.

### **The way Forward**

My dream for Interface is for Interface to become more involved in advocacy and in raising awareness. Desirae and I have both tried exceptionally hard to get TV programmes including Great Expectations and Zola 7, involved but with no success to date. This has been very frustrating as have the attempts to get AAC devices for individuals from the Department of Health!

I think we need to come up with another way of making our voice heard. I would also like to see more branches of Interface being established with individuals who use AAC assisting in running these new branches. Finally, I would like to thank the existing branches that have continued to be active in furthering AAC in South Africa. Keep up the good work and expand!

Dan Ngcobo

Chairperson Interface NCC