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the

muse

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PINELANDS COMMUNITY MAGAZINE

ISSUE 168 | December 2025

MERRY
Christmas
AND
HAPPY NEW YEAR



Christmas Salad & Pudding

Nina Timm



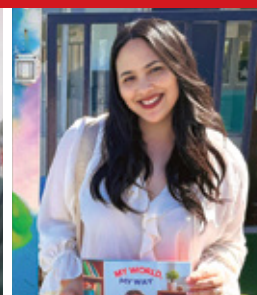
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WELCOME



Glynnis & Max Schutte



Kurrichane Thrush

One of the joys of birding away from home is finding different but similar birds. The Kurrichane Thrush, found in central and southern Africa, is similar to the Olive Thrush found in many local gardens. Slightly lighter in colour than the Olive Thrush, the Kurrichane Thrush has dark malar stripes that distinguish it. A malar stripe is a stripe across the cheek of the bird. Kurrichane thrushes are monogamous and build a cup shaped nest placed in the fork of a large tree. Their food consists mainly of insects but will extend to fruit as well.

John McFarlane, author of the regular Muse bird feature enjoys the company of garden birds at his home in Pinewood Village. He has the usual bird feeders for seed and fruit and a bird bath to attract a variety of birds. His time spent in game parks including Kruger National Park is always rewarded with plenty of bird sightings.



REMEMBER THE PAST, CELEBRATE THE PRESENT AND LIVE FOR THE FUTURE

And so, we have almost put another year behind us... There was just too much crazy stuff to even try and review it in a short piece like this. Suffice it to say that we all probably need a good break to rest our weary heads before the New Year brings whatever it will with it.

But let's also remember and be grateful for the good that came our way this year, the wisdom and experience we gathered, nourishing time spent with family and friends, peaceful moments of contemplation, new discoveries and the simple enjoyment of the pleasures of life.

To all of our readers and clients, we hope you have a peaceful year end with joyful celebrations, wherever you are and whatever tradition you follow. Glynnis and I wish you a very Merry Christmas and all the best for the New Year.

Looking back, we noticed that we have been doing *the Muse* for 15 years now! Thank you to the many advertisers who have supported us and made this monthly publication possible. Many of you have been with us from the start and we value your loyalty. Thank you also to our readers and to those who tell us they enjoy reading the magazine. It really does encourage us to keep going.

Here's to the journey ahead in 2026. May it offer you opportunities, some new adventures, a bit of luck, a lot of love, friendship and laughter, and make many good memories for you. Let me finish this thought with the words of Confucius: "Wherever you go, go with all your heart."

We will take our usual annual break in December, so there will not be a January edition. Look out for the next edition (Feb 2026) which will be published on 27 January 2026.

We hope you enjoy this edition.

Max & Glynnis Schutte

Editor and Advertising
Max Schutte

Writer and Photographer
Glynnis Schutte

CONTACT THE MUSE MAGAZINE

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● muse@pinelandsdirectory.co.za



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Your news, photographs and stories can be submitted to The Muse Magazine by email at muse@pinelandsdirectory.co.za.

The Muse reserves the right to select articles for inclusion and to make alterations to submitted contributions.

NEXT EDITION

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DEADLINES

Bookings: 12 Jan

Content: 16 Jan

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Saturday 29 Nov 2025 ANNUAL FÊTE AT PINELANDS RETIREMENT VILLAGE

Enjoy bric-a-brac, plant sales, cake sales, a tea lounge, book sales, crafters and more from 09:00 to 13:00. Call, Kaare 072 444 8082.

Sunday 30 Nov 2025 PINELANDS UNITED CHURCH

Join in the Carols by Candlelight Service at 19:00. e-mail pcchurch@cybersmart.co.za.

December 2025 PINELANDS LIBRARY ACTIVITIES

Wednesday 3 December: HAPPY HOUR

09:30 to 11:00. Party Time - all welcome. Next meeting in February. Call Santa 083 235 6730.

Thursday 4 Dec: PAGE TURNERS Book Club. 10:00 to 11:00. Join in for a Book Chat.

Call Verna/Lauren 021 814 1780.

Friday 12 Dec: PINEES PRAM JAM. 10:00 to 10:40. Music, movement & stories for toddlers, birth to 4 years old. Call Verna/Lauren 021 814 1780.

PLANT SWAP: Resumes again on 11 Feb 2026.

Saturday 6 Dec 2025 PINELANDS METHODIST CHURCH "MARKET ON UNION"

Get in early for Christmas. Find gifts and gift ideas. Enjoy warm fellowship as you munch your Saturday brunch of a pancake and/or an egg and bacon roll. Then find some take home eats and treats. Between 09:00 and 12:00, in the church hall at 2 Union Avenue. Call Joan on 082 810 1889.

Saturdays 2025 09:00 to 13:00 BRIC-A-BRAC SALES FOR KAPS

Support (KAPS) at the Pinelands Club. Call Gloria 083 450 2782.

Sat 6 Dec 2025 13:00 - 14:00
Mon 8 Dec 2025 12:00 - 13:00

BLUE SCHOOL CAROL SINGING

The Blue School Marimba Ensemble will present A Festive Summer Performance in the Howard Centre.

December 2025 10:00 to 11:00

PINELANDS LIBRARY HOLIDAY PROGRAMME

Wed 17 Dec: Story time with Libee

Thurs 18 Dec: Learn about water preservation

Friday 19 Dec: Fun and games

RSVP: Verna/Lauren 021 814 1780.

6 to 23 December 2025 PINELANDS CRAFT AND GIFT FAIR

The annual craft and gift fair at Pinelands High School is a cashless indoor market with card facilities. Find a variety of gifts for all ages from 200 crafters. Enjoy coffee, light meals and ice cream too. Entrance is free and parking is safe.

Weekdays: 09:00 to 19:00

Sat and Sun 09:00 to 17:00.

Fridays HELEN KELLER SOCIETY BOOK ROOM AND NURSERY OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Sales from the book room and garden nursery are closed for December, and will re-open on Friday 30 January 2026. Time: 10:00 to noon. Call Bev Wroth on 021 531 5311.

Wednesday 28 Jan 2026 PINELANDS STAMP CIRCLE

Meet at 18:30 in the Activities Hall above the Pinelands Library. All Members: Favourites and New Acquisitions.

Email Martin: m.tristan.crawford@gmail.com.

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Send content for the February 2026 edition by 16 January 2026.

Publication will be 27 January 2026. R180 ensures placement

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SOME OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS THIS YEAR

- ▶ Connected 49 sellers with buyers.
- ▶ Sold the six most expensive homes in Pinelands.*
- ▶ R20 million in rental income collected and managed for landlords.
- ▶ Seven times winner of the prestigious Seeff Small Branch of the Year award.
- ▶ The most active and recognised real estate agency in Pinelands and Thornton.*
- ▶ Actively sponsored and participated in various initiatives in our community.

At R7 995 000, sold the most expensive home registered in Pinelands this year.



*As per Property24 and Lightstone as of Nov 2025



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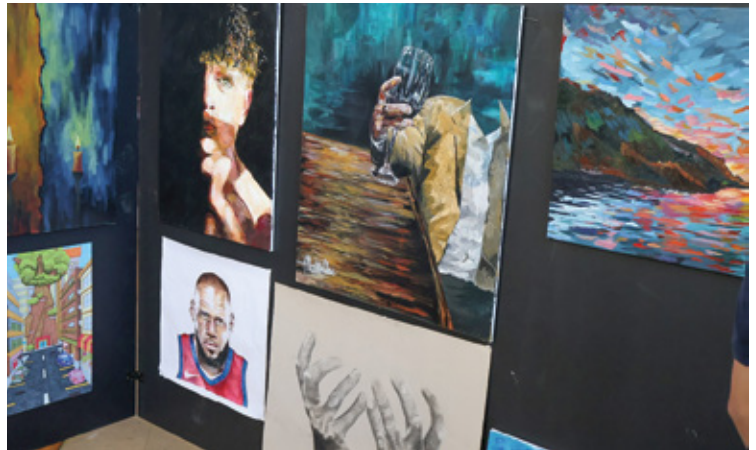
COMMUNITY NEWS

PINELANDS HIGH MATRIC ART AND DESIGN EVENING

At the end of October, Pinelands High hosted its annual Matric Art and Design Evening. The event was well attended by alumni, current learners, staff, families, and friends, reflecting the strength of the Pinelands community.

This year's exhibition was notably strong, presenting rigorous concepts across diverse media. Staging the showcase in the main school hall underscored the school's commitment to the Arts, while the careful installation highlighted the quality of the work.

Sincere thanks to the grounds team for their foundational support, and to all staff whose guidance and high expectations shaped this accomplished body of work. ■



PNPS ANNUAL POETRY COMPETITION: A CELEBRATION OF LANGUAGE AND TALENT

On Wednesday 22 October, Pinelands North Primary School hosted their Annual Poetry Competition. This special occasion celebrates the beauty of language and the power of creative expression, providing learners with a platform to showcase their remarkable talents in poetry writing across various languages.

The competition featured two main categories, namely Recitals and Aspiring Poets. In the Recitals category learners selected and performed poems of their choice with confidence and emotion, while in the Aspiring Poets category young writers presented their own original works, filled with creativity and insight.

The event showcased talented writers, eloquent speakers, and also gave a glimpse of potential future actors and politicians - learners whose captivating performances brought each poem to life on stage.

The Annual Poetry Competition reminds us of the importance of nurturing creativity and celebrating the voices and talents of our young poets - and perhaps our future actors as well. PNPS looks forward eagerly to more passion, artistry, and excellence in the years to come. ■



Senior phase from left: Tara Lee (Judge), Farah Waggie (Recitals winner), Nokutenda Matsika (Recitals Runner up), Gia Louw (Aspiring Poet Runner up), Qiniso Freeth (Aspiring Poet winner), Jameelah Ismail (Judge)



Intermediate Phase from left: Timothy Kearney (Recitals Winner), Jude Prince (Aspiring Poet Winner), Brigitta Lewis (Aspiring Poet Runner Up), Eva Arun Thomas (Recitals Runner Up)



Foundation Phase from left: Oliver Schaal (Recital Winner), Aakifah Isaacs (Aspiring Poet Winner), Gabriella Ferhsen (Recital Runner Up), Salma Daniels (Aspiring Poet Runner Up) with the principal, Shereen Stadler





Wishing all Pinelands residents
Happy Holidays!

Your Pinelands area specialists

Contact me for a complimentary *market-related evaluation* of your home.

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COMMUNITY NEWS**COME AND SEE THE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS IN MANATOKA WAY!**

Tom Botha of Peninsula Pools invites all residents, especially children to his annual Christmas lights extravaganza at the corner of Manatoka Way and Poplar Way in Pinelands. Every night at 8pm the lights will go on from 15 December up until 6 January 2026. They will go off again at 10pm except over Christmas and New Year when they will stay on for longer. This tradition began with Tom's father more than 20 years ago and is a Pinelands favourite! ■



PHPS Senior Choir

PINEHURST LOVES MUSIC!

A wave of musical excitement swept through Pinehurst Primary School this year, with a surge of new learners diving into individual and group lessons across a diverse range of instruments.

Wonderful opportunities and music events followed this year. To mention but a few:

- Performances at Pinelands High School's Sunset Concert
- Pinehurst Open Day, serenading audiences with harmonious sounds
- Mini Maestros Concert, many 'first' young musician performances
- *A Tapestry of Song*, sharing the stage with the Tygerberg Children's Choir at the Cape Town City Hall
- Choral Celebration Festival at the Cape Town City Hall
- Playing at the Marimba Guinness World Record attempt at Grand West - doubling the previous record
- Kaapse Afrikaanse, Cape Town Eisteddfod and Trinity Music Exams participation



PHPS Megan Finegan

with excellent results

- Midi Maestros Music Concert - best yet
- Prestige Music Concert - an unforgettable evening of music
- Arrival of a Baby Grand - YAY!
- New Tygerberg Children's Choir members - altogether five PHPS learners!
- Grade 7 Farewell Music Concert - thank you for the music, the songs I'm singing. Thanks for all the joy they're bringing. Who can live without it? I ask in all honesty...

It's not a secret that Pinehurst learners love making music! ■

I O'Reilly, Head of Music, Pinehurst Primary.

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MONEY MATTERS



By
Sue Torr
Director
Crue Invest

The season of spending: Why December deserves a values audit

December is the month when sentiment and spending collide. Shop windows sparkle, inboxes overflow with 'once-a-year' deals, and social calendars fill faster than our bank balances can keep up. Retailers call it the festive rush. Financial planners call it cash-flow chaos. But perhaps there's another way to see it: not as the season of excess, but as the perfect time for a values audit — a quiet assessment of whether your money is still telling the story you want it to.

Beyond budgets and bargains

Every year, articles appear urging restraint: make a budget, avoid credit, plan for January. It frames December as a problem to survive rather than an opportunity to reflect. The truth is, how you spend this month says a great deal about your life priorities and reveals what you celebrate, what you fear missing, and what you believe brings joy.

What your spending says about you

Think of money as a mirror. When emotions run high, as they do in December, that mirror becomes especially revealing. You may believe family time is sacred, yet find your expenses tilted towards things rather than experiences. You may value generosity but resent the pressure to give. These aren't failures; they're insights. They expose where your financial habits are out of sync with your personal philosophy.

Generosity with intention

Guilt has long been the currency of festive financial advice: "Don't overspend." "Don't fall into debt." "Don't get caught in January worry." But fear doesn't foster wisdom; it breeds reaction. What if, instead of guilt, generosity became your guiding principle? True generosity isn't measured in Rands but in relevance and in how meaningfully a gesture lands. A small, thoughtful gift given with intention outweighs an expensive one chosen in haste. Paying a domestic worker's school fees, gifting a grandparent an afternoon of your time, or helping a teenager start a savings account.

The joy equation

Behavioural economists have long known that *how* we spend affects happiness more than *how much* we spend. Experiences such as shared meals, travel and kindness deliver longer-lasting joy than possessions. Yet marketers have spent decades teaching us to equate buying with belonging. To reclaim

agency, ask yourself: which festive memories still make you smile? Chances are, they involve connection, not consumption. Joy, it turns out, has a higher return on presence than on price.

The performance of giving

Social pressure peaks in December. We match the spending of peers to maintain belonging — a phenomenon psychologists call "social proof." Lavish parties, branded gifts, extravagant holidays: all signals, not always of generosity, but often of insecurity disguised as celebration. Financial confidence lets you celebrate without comparison, knowing that love cannot be measured in receipts.

Legacy in the moment

Every household has a December rhythm highlighting how you give, spend, and celebrate. Children absorb this more deeply than we realise. If your December behaviour became your family's financial culture, what would it teach? Scarcity? Indulgence? Or intentional abundance — joy within boundaries? Each act of thoughtful planning models stewardship. The lesson is not restraint for its own sake but the freedom that flows from aligning money with meaning.

The art of conscious spending

Before you swipe or click "buy now," pause. Ask three simple questions:

- Does this align with my values?
- Will this matter a year from now?
- What emotion am I trying to satisfy?

This tiny act of reflection transforms spending from impulsive to intentional. Conscious spending isn't austere; it's deliberate. It allows for indulgence — but indulgence that resonates rather than evaporates.

Designing a different December

Consider making this the year you conduct a personal values audit. Revisit last December's bank statement and notice the patterns: where did your money go, and does it reflect who you want to be? Plan for the emotional spending triggers of loneliness, guilt, or family pressure and replace them with conscious alternatives. Around the dinner table, ask not "what do you want?" but "what do you value?" Create experiences that generate stories, not clutter.

December doesn't have to be a test of willpower. It can be a rehearsal for alignment and a reminder that every transaction tells a story about what you believe matters. ■

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from the
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At Crue Invest, we believe that sound financial planning is about more than numbers — it's about people, families, and futures. Our dedicated team of Certified Financial Planners®, tax and legal experts, and highly skilled support staff work collaboratively to deliver truly integrated and independent financial advice.

This year has been one of continued growth and gratitude for our team. As we reflect on the many milestones achieved alongside our clients, we are reminded that our success is built on enduring relationships, trust, and shared purpose.

From all of us at Crue Invest, we wish you and your loved ones a joyful and peaceful festive season, and a prosperous start to 2026.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

CANNONS CREEK PREFECTS 2026

Cannons Creek Independent High School announced its 2026 Prefects at its Prefect Induction Service on 23 September 2025. In a special rite of passage and a truly symbolic act - the current office-bearers' candle flames were extinguished, and the incoming Prefects' candle flames were lit.

Back row: Grace Wilkins, Juan Coetzee, Muhammad Hamdulay, Sophia Stamatiadis.

Front row: Hannah Van Aarde, Oscar Davies (Deputy Head Prefect), Amarachi Zondi (Head Prefect), Salih Jaffar, and Imrah Bardien. ■

CELEBRATING A FULFILLING MUSICAL YEAR AT THE BLUE SCHOOL

🎵 **Pinelands High School Sunset Concert**
The Pinelands Primary School Senior Choir proudly took part in the Pinelands High School Sunset Concert on 7 March 2025, flying the Blue School Flag high.

🎵 **Carnival of the Animals**
Grade 2 learners attended the performance of Camille Saint-Saëns' *Carnival of the Animals* at the Hugo Lambrecht Music Centre, Parow. The excursion allowed the learners to enjoy a live experience of the unique sound qualities of the different instruments of the orchestra and their various capabilities.

🎵 **National Teaching Awards**
The school Choirs and Marimba Ensemble performed at the National Teaching Awards on Wednesday, 18 June, at the invitation of the Metro Central Education District office.

🎵 Guinness World Record

The musicians of the Blue School Marimba Ensemble were among 1 177 participants who successfully broke the Guinness World Record for the largest marimba ensemble on Saturday 2 August 2025 at the Grand West Arena. What an exciting event this was!

🎵 Samaritan's Feet Walk of Hope

The Blue School Marimba Team performed alongside Canon's Creek at the Samaritan's Feet Walk of Hope on Saturday, 31 August 2025. Members of the community were invited to join a stroll along the Elsieskraal Canal in Pinelands in an effort to raise funds to provide essential items, such as shoes and socks, to children who desperately need them to access education.

🎵 Spring Market at Woodside

On Saturday 6 September 2025, the school's Junior Choir performed at Woodside Special Care Centre for their Spring Market. Woodside is a residential home providing 24-hour care for profoundly intellectually and physically challenged residents from eight years old and older. The school's participation was a way of supporting the

institution in its mission, especially as it celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2026.

🎵 Annual Music Showcases

The annual music showcase is the highlight of the music department at the Blue School. It gives parents and relatives of music students a chance to enjoy the repertoire the students have developed and to see the progress their children have made in mastering their instruments. For the first time this year, our music programme has expanded so much that the showcase was held over two evenings. The school's vocal and instrumental ensembles, instrumental pupils, and the Grade 3 recorder programme all performed, impressing the audience.

🎵 Carols at Howard Centre 2025

The Blue School Marimba Ensemble will present *A Festive Summer Performance* in the Howard Centre on:

Saturday 6 December, 13:00 – 14:00 and Monday 8 December, noon – 13:00.

from: Mikyle Adams
Head of Music, Pinelands Primary School (The Blue School)



Musicians at the Annual Music Showcase





Life's A Dream

by Mark van Niekerk

In the October 2020 issue of the Muse, readers were introduced to Mark van Niekerk's fascinating journey into blue water cruising, despite growing up and working as a chartered accountant in Johannesburg—far from the sea. We learned that he eventually circumnavigated the world on a catamaran he co-designed

and had built in Cape Town. During the COVID lockdown he was also writing a book about his adventures.

Fast forward to August 2024 where on completion he asked Max and Glynnis Schutte to edit the book, *Life's A Dream*, which is also the name of his catamaran, in readiness for final publication.

Throughout its reading, Max and Glynnis marvelled at his oceanic adventures and wondered how he survived the dangerous situations he faced. They also longed to visit the beautiful places he described.

The core of Mark's book highlights his deep love for the sea and blue water cruising worldwide. It features detailed maps, photographs of crew and destinations, and, for boat builders, plans and advice on preparing for high-seas journeys.

The narrative includes many memorable moments: a high-drama man-overboard situation on angry seas mere hours into his first voyage; a collision with a fishing trawler off Australia; visiting Mount Yasur, an active volcano in Tanna in the South Pacific; diving on *Life's A Dream's* anchor tangled with another boat's in rough conditions in the dark of night; replacing

a lost port engine propeller underwater; surviving a collision involving a research vessel in Galápagos' Playa Tortuga Bay; navigating the Panama Canal locks; visiting the Cocos Keeling Islands; and many more.

From Cape Town onward, the book showcases Mark's extensive knowledge of his vessel and its capabilities, as well as his honest dealings with family, friends, crew, and maritime authorities. It's an engaging adventure story that leaves a legacy for his family and future generations.

The narrative also includes humorous anecdotes and life-changing events, including a childhood accident at age six when he crashed through a glass door leaving him fighting for his life and spending months in hospital – a time and place where he read books voraciously including those about sailors and sailing – the inspiration which created his lifelong dream.

In Mark's words:

"...written for everyone who dares to dream."

Life's A Dream is available on Amazon.com.

Kindle version R 171.02

Paperback R 325.09



Mark's circumnavigation on *Life's A Dream*

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EXPLORING THE ISLE OF MULL

By Dorothy Du Plooy

The Isle of Mull is the fourth largest island in Scotland and the second largest of the Inner Hebrides. See the green area on the map top right. According to Wikipedia, the population increased from 2 800 in 2011 to 3 063 in 2022. A whole 263 new people!

Mark and his family spent many happy holidays in Scotland and particularly on the Isle of Mull. He longed to reconnect with his memories and share this beautiful place with me. I was sold on the idea when I heard about the delicious seafood in Scotland.

The trip to Mull is a short 45 minute ferry ride from Oban across The Firth of Lorn and up the Sound of Mull, to dock in Craginure. The very dry summer turned to rain as we drove our rental car onto the ferry, clearing long enough for us to go on the deck and spot Duart Castle.

Our B&B was the second house on the left, as Judith told us, in Salen, which was just a 15 minute drive from Craginure, and we arrived there in the early evening. For dinner, we enjoyed very generous helpings of fresh mussels harvested at the nearby farm and beer battered haddock which will be one of my all time favourite dishes. The population of Salen was 500 in 2011 and could have gone up by about 10% looking at the few relatively new houses.

We set off to visit Tobermory on our first day. Because of the topography of the island, there is often only a small strip of land between the sea and the mountain, and the road follows the coastline. The road is a single lane for most of the way, with lay bys every now and again so that one or two vehicles can pull off to let the oncoming traffic pass. The scenery is breathtakingly beautiful. The roads are

either lined by trees that form a canopy over the road, to give you the impression of driving in a vivid green tunnel being surrounded by moss and foliage, or pastures dotted with sheep. I was amazed to see stretches of wild purple heather.

Tobermory, a fishing village, is the biggest town on Mull and very quaint with the buildings all painted in bright colours. The hanging flower baskets add to the colour pallet. Due to the fact that there is not much space for the town to spread out, shops are multi purposed. The pharmacy shares space with the pet shop and the bakery/tearoom/chocolatier sells trinkets from Mull.

It was while we were savouring scones and tea at this bakery that Mark phoned West Coast Tours to book our boat tour to the island where the Puffins breed. For the avid birders that we are, we were both devastated to find out that the Puffins only breed there in June and July before they migrate north and there was not a puffin to be seen in August other than in the shops. (It is at this point where you have to challenge the fact that we call ourselves keen birders!) I was so sad, that I resorted to retail therapy and bought a scarf and a chocolate tin decorated with puffins.

Scotland and Mull are also known for their *Highland 'coos'*, which are very beautiful long haired cows with straight long horns and a long fringe that just about covers their faces. Being worried that I might not see the coos either, I bought another scarf and an apron, this time decorated with coos. Luckily, they don't have wings and can't migrate and Mark was kind enough to pull into a lay bye (with a queue of cars

behind us) so that I could climb out to take a picture of the coos in pouring rain.

Aros Park is just outside of Tobermory and we loved the walk in the forest along the river and was welcomed by a very tame Eurasian Robin that came right up to us. We had just enough time to enjoy the Aros waterfall, before the heavens opened and gave us the true taste of Scottish weather.

After shelving the boat trip to the smaller islands and Fingal's cave, we headed off to Duart Castle. The castle has been newly renovated, and it was interesting to see all the relics and meet two of the Macleans who still own the land. Castles tend to be freezing cold inside, which makes me happy that I was not born into royalty.

We drove to Loch Buie, where Mark used to fish in years gone by. If I thought that the road to Tobermory was narrow, then the Loch Buie road was even more of a surprise with two tracks for most of the way and the Old Post Office Tearoom and campsite at the end of the road. Because the island is relatively small, one could be tricked into planning a long drive, but the very narrow roads and frequent stops to navigate oncoming traffic, keeps you traveling at a snail's pace and by the end of the day you haven't covered half the distance that you had hoped to do.

I asked our host about the early autumn colours. He mentioned that it had been a very dry summer and the autumn colours were due to salt burn from the strong winds that came off the sea.

On our way back to the ferry, I could see a changed landscape with many rivulets cascading down the mountain refreshing all the beautiful vegetation. I loved Mull. ■



Brightly painted buildings of Tobermory



A Highland 'coo'



PINELANDS CID: CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENTS OF 2025 AND EMBRACING THE FESTIVE SEASON

Reflecting on 2025, we're immensely proud of the strides made by the Pinelands CID and our vibrant community. Together, we've enhanced safety and nurtured the spirit of togetherness. Here's our final update for the year from our portfolio directors.

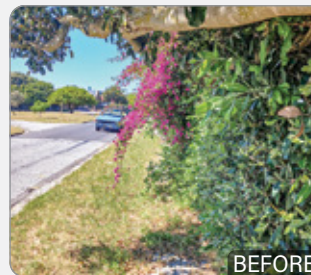
SAFETY AND SECURITY

As the festive season unfolds, the Pinelands CID is implementing a "Festive Season Safety Plan 2025/26" in collaboration with local authorities and is dedicated to creating a safe and festive atmosphere in our suburb. From December to January, expect increased safety and security patrols. *"Our aim this season is simple: To keep Pinelands clean, safe, and full of festive spirit."*



ENVIRONMENTAL

Coronation Park has been rejuvenated with new installations, and landscaping, transforming it into a welcoming haven for relaxation and play, strengthening our community bonds. Our efforts in clearing overgrown pathways enhance safety and accessibility, reflecting our commitment to preserving our suburb's beauty and functionality.



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

This festive season, we celebrate the incredible efforts of our Social Development team. They've worked tirelessly to provide safe spaces for vulnerable people and drive awareness campaigns. We're supporting efforts to get rough sleepers to safe shelters and are in the process of implementing a food voucher system with three community kitchens outside Pinelands, aiming to reduce bin scratching in our suburb. Look for our bright yellow-clad Umanyano SA/CID Team as they enhance monitoring on the ground on bicycles, continuing their vital community initiatives to support those less fortunate.



The Pinelands CID would like to thank you for your unwavering support and dedication. Let's embrace the festive season with joy and gratitude.

The Board of Directors & Operational Management Team wish everyone a blessed festive season and a prosperous 2026. STAY SAFE!



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The Italian Campaign

By Dave Shaw

Dave Shaw, a retired High School Principal with a passion for history, was delighted at the response to the launch of his book *The Italian Campaign* on 4 November. The book is described as a photo essay following the route taken by the 6th South African Armoured Division in 1943 to 1945. The publication was inspired after Dave and Gina traced the footsteps of Captain Edward Shaw, Dave's father, during WWII, when the South African 6th Armoured Division fought their way up the spine of Italy against Nazi forces. Their travelogue can be read in the Muse November 2023 edition.

What have you enjoyed the most about writing the book?

Realizing that there are still many Italians who are very grateful for our young men who fought and sacrificed for their freedom from Nazi tyranny. Also linking 1944-1945 accounts and photographs with places we visited in the beautiful Italian countryside.

What is the most important message readers can draw from the book?

I would like readers to know about the contribution South African soldiers made in Italy during WWII and to feel that they

have accompanied us as we travelled. I'm also hoping that the information read will link with half-forgotten stories told by fathers, uncles or grandfathers so that their sacrifice can be more fully understood and honoured today.

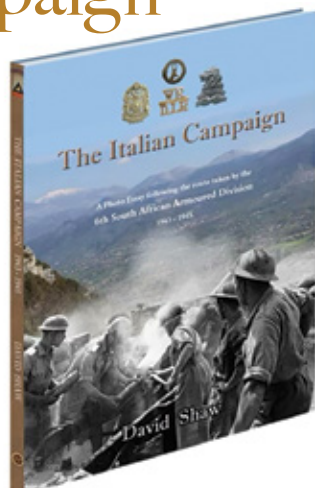
What did you learn about your father that you didn't know before?

I learnt that the hard fought victory against the German soldiers at Monte Stanco where my father was praised for his work as Information Officer saving many civilian lives. Fifty-five of our young men were

killed during this battle but if they had not forced the enemy off Mt Stanco, the SS would have executed the second half of the civilian population of the Grizzana area who they had already rounded up as a reprisal for the activity of Italian partisans in the vicinity. They had executed the first half of the population the day before the battle took place.

The book is available in hardcover (R450) and soft cover (R320).

Email: italiancampaignwrdlr@gmail.com to order or for more information. ■



Dave Shaw signing a copy of *The Italian Campaign* for Bev Coetzee at the launch.

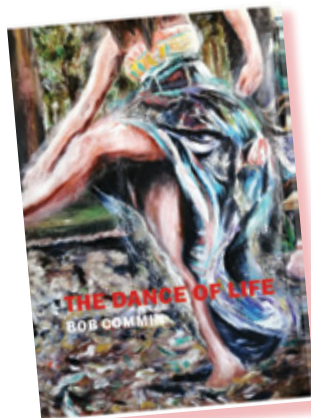
THE DANCE OF LIFE a poetry book by Bob Commin

Report by Emeritus Prof Geoffrey Haresnape

The Dance of Life by Bob Commin was launched at a well-attended function in the St Stephen's Church Hall, Pinelands, on Saturday afternoon on 14 June. The book comes in five sections and contains 42 titles—so there is a lot of verse to meditate upon and enjoy. Perhaps the most important clue to Bob's work is that he is both Anglican priest and poet. In fact in his case both priest and poet intertwine.

When we have *The Dance of Life* in our hands, and go through it page by page, we discover poems which draw upon childhood experience, poems of nature, poems which celebrate family and friends, poems in honour of fellow clerics, and poems charting the ups and downs of his favourite game, hockey.

In his introduction Bob writes: "I have always had an ear for the sound of words, their rhythm and drama." We certainly find this to be true in the poems contained in this book. Unlike much cerebral poetry which is bound to the page on which it is written, Bob's poems ask to be read aloud, even to be performed by a variety of voices. It has



often been recorded how childhood can be a formative time for a poet; e.g. William Wordsworth's phrase "the child is father of the man". Arguably some of the most successful poems in Bob's collection spring from his Woodstock childhood when he experienced, in the words of a key poem, *Sommer a Cupful of Life*.

Hockey Poems show the poet exchanging his Woodstock bat and ball for a sophisticated hockey stick with white ball to match. These poems give expression to the darkly comic, and even macabre, qualities of striving to remain active in



Bob Commin, retired Anglican priest, poet and storyteller.

spite of age-induced handicaps. However, the dominant mood of the book lies in the realm of blessings and ritualistic formulations which spring from Bob's vocation. An appropriate quotation from poet Rainer Maria Rilke sets the tone at the head of the text... "Oh, tell me poet what do you do? I praise."

The Book can be bought at St Stephen's church, Pinelands, mornings.

Contact Barbara 0741038999 or Whatsapp Bob 0822025303. ■

MY WORLD, MY WAY

by Lisa Witten

Pinelander, Lisa Witten, author of the book *My World, My Way* aims to raise awareness of children on the autism spectrum, by sharing her experiences while raising her daughter Mila.



In 2024, we welcomed our youngest child, and with that came the desire to settle in a community known for its excellent schools. As fate would have it, my in-laws, who used to live in Pinelands, mentioned that their tenants' lease was coming to an end. It felt like the perfect sign and the right moment for us to move into the suburb.

We first noticed differences in Mila's development when she was very young. While every child grows at their own pace, there were small signs that made us pause, such as severe meltdowns over what we considered "irrational" moments of heightened sensitivity to sounds and textures. The major red flag was regression of speech. As parents, we felt something was different, but we didn't have the understanding to know what it meant.

Eventually I made an appointment with the educational psychologist to have Mila assessed. When the time came, the assessments and all the back-and-forth added layers of stress and uncertainty. There were days when it felt like we were moving in circles, desperate for clarity.

Eventually, after persistent follow-ups, we received a formal autism diagnosis. While it was overwhelming at first, it also brought relief. It gave us a name for what we had been experiencing and a path forward. Understanding Mila's unique needs helped us embrace her strengths, advocate more confidently, and create an environment where she could flourish. The journey was challenging, but it shaped us into stronger, more aware parents, and it allowed us to truly celebrate Mila for who she is.

I never knew what autism was. I was afraid, angry, confused. First in denial. Why my child? Then came a wave of self pity and guilt. What did I do wrong? When will the meltdowns end? I knew that the road wouldn't be smooth sailing. We went on our first family trip flying to Johannesburg. Mila was well behaved – no one would have guessed that she was autistic. She watched a movie on the laptop and before we knew it, we had landed. Then things became harder. She wanted to get out of the airplane and out of the airport. She screamed when we drove in directions that weren't heading her way. Maybe she wanted to turn left because she saw an ice cream shop. Many other kids her age would verbalise this. Mila couldn't. She would scream, scratch or bite her way out.

My book, *My World, My Way*, is a heartfelt look into life through Mila's eyes. It was inspired by our real journey—navigating her day to day life as a six year old, understanding her needs, and celebrating her strengths. I wrote it because I wanted to create something meaningful, something that could help other families feel seen, supported, and less alone.

This book is for parents, caregivers, teachers, and anyone who interacts with neurodiverse children. It's also for children themselves, especially those who may feel "different" and need reassurance that their uniqueness is something to be proud of. The story is simple, accessible, and beautifully illustrated, making it suitable for young readers while still resonating deeply with adults.

What I aim to convey is acceptance, understanding, and empathy. I want readers to step into Mila's world and see how she experiences everyday moments, what brings her joy, what challenges her, and how she communicates in her own special way. Ultimately, the book encourages readers to embrace neurodiversity with compassion and curiosity. It is a reminder that every child has their own rhythm, their own strengths, and their own way of being in the world—and that is something worth celebrating.

I have added some activities with colouring pages to keep the younger ones engaged as well and footnotes on each chapter that will allow parents/teachers to explain to children about neurodiversity and encourage them to be more accepting.

Sometimes stimming is simply part of what autistic children do. It can take many forms, for example spinning, rocking back and forth, flapping hands, or repeating actions. It's a self-regulating mechanism that helps them cope with overwhelming environments. Children (and adults) need to understand that stimming isn't something to stare at, laugh at, or mock. The kindest approach is to give the person space and, if appropriate, gently ask if they need help or comfort.

It broke my heart when kids would run away from Mila as she tried to make friends. She could say a few words around 3-4 years old and mostly, we understood her. Some kids would make fun of the sounds she would make or just stare. I understand some kids just didn't know. There were times going into shops that had Mila running in the



Lisa Witten

opposite direction. I never knew why but now I do. The possible noises of the fridges in the cold section or the constant noises of the trolleys and people chatting that most neurotypical people can block out.

When it comes to kindness, I often think of an incident my husband experienced at a mall. Mila became completely overwhelmed by all the sensory input in a particular store. She refused to move forward and started screaming. People stared, as they often do, and he still needed to get dog food. He knelt beside her, trying to reassure her, giving her space, telling her he would pick her up and leave. At that moment she couldn't process it and went into a severe meltdown and tried to bite her way out of his hold. A woman approached and said, "I recognise that scream. My child is also autistic. What do you need? I'll get it and meet you at the till." That simple act of courage and compassion was one of the most meaningful gestures we've ever experienced.

Important aspects of autism to consider:

- Each autistic child is unique. As Dr Stephen Shore said "If you've met one child with autism, you've met one child with autism."
- Have conversations with your children at a young age introducing the topic of neurodiversity.
- Help shape a compassionate society that empowers autistic children to become successful, supported adults in their careers.
- Don't compare autistic kids with the term "normal." Normal implies something is wrong or less. Rather use the term neurotypical instead.

I am selling the book directly and have tried to keep it affordable by doing everything myself except the printing. The cost is R190 with a courier fee of R100 nationwide. I am running a special until 19 December for Christmas, where copies will be delivered free in Pinelands (only).

Email me at booksaleorders@gmail.com.

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By Nina Timm

Cook, teacher, blogger and author of *Easy Cooking from Nina's Kitchen* and *Maklike Etes uit Nina se Kombuis!*

Christmas Salad

Serves 4

Ingredients

80 g baby butter lettuce
2 mini savoy cabbages
1 smoked pork fillet
1 small packet croutons
1 x 200 g good quality liver pâté
200 ml cranberries
100 g low fat goats milk cheese
200 ml pecan nuts
pomegranate pips
4 baby courgettes
1 bottle honey & mustard salad dressing



Method for the Christmas salad

1. Pan-fry the pork fillet for 10 – 12 minutes or until it is cooked through.
2. Cool the fillet.
3. Spread a little pâté on each crouton. Now you are ready to assemble the salads.
4. Divide the butter lettuce and the smaller inner leaves of the savoy cabbages amongst

four pretty plates.

5. "Peel" the courgettes into thin ribbons using a vegetable peeler.
6. Divide the pork fillet & other ingredients amongst the plates.
7. Scatter the pomegranate pips over the salad and drizzle with mustard dressing.
8. Lastly crumble the cheese over the top.

Christmas flavours

A Christmas would not be a proper Christmas if it didn't have all the traditional Christmas flavours. So which flavours to part with.... the pork with crackling?

No way Jose! The gammon with mom's mustard? Definitely not! Each one in our big family has his or her own favourite, what to do? What is more worrying is that as our family grows, a new son-in-law and daughter-in-law come with even more new

recipes and trying not to offend an in-law, we happily just add another table to make room for all the new dishes!

I just want to say, that I bought most of the ingredients, which is ideal if a laid back Christmas lunch is your kind of thing!

Summer Christmas Pudding

Vanilla sponge ingredients

250 g soft butter
250 ml sugar
250 ml self raising flour
2 tsp baking powder
3 eggs
1 tsp vanilla extract
pinch of salt

Method for vanilla sponge

Place all the ingredients in a mixer and beat until light and pale in colour.

Fruit topping ingredients

250 g strawberries
125 g blue berries
125 g blackberries
250 ml water
125 ml sugar
pinch of salt
50 ml kirsch
1 vanilla pod – just cut open

Method for fruit topping

1. Heat the water and sugar in a saucepan. Allow sugar to melt, then add all the fruit as well as the salt and the vanilla pod.
2. Bring the mix to a slow boil and cook for about five minutes or until the sauce has reduced to about half. Add the kirsch and flambé the fruit.

To make the puddings

1. Grease six oven-proof teacups and spoon about two tablespoons of the fruit topping into each cup, top with some of the vanilla sponge mixture and fill cup to about 3/4. Bake for about 20-25 minutes or until a skewer comes out clean when tested.
2. When ready to serve, tip puddings out onto a serving plate and serve with more fresh berries a good scoop of vanilla ice-cream or chantilly cream!



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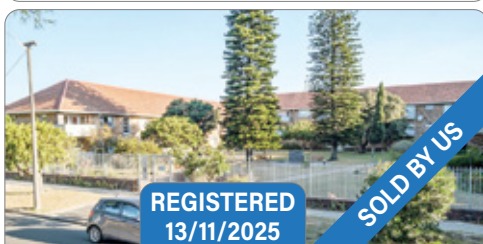
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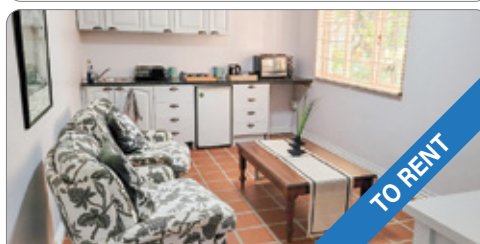
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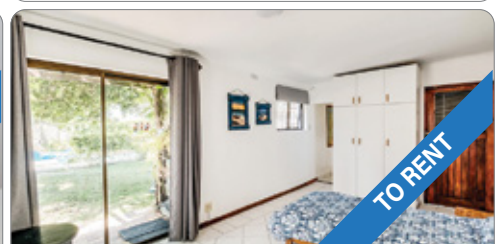
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