

BUSHBUCKRIDGE HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES CONSORTIUM

Postal Address

P.O. Box 3092
Acornhoek 1360

Street Address

Tinstwalo main road
Next to old Taxi Rank
Acornhoek, Mpumalanga

Contact Numbers

013 7955412 (Tel/Fax)
082 706 0854 (Cell)



Reg. Number(s)

030-284 (under NPO act of 1997)

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31 August 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

Bushbuckridge Health and Social Services Consortium (BHSSC) is a non-profit dedicated to assisting the 60,000 residents of Acornhoek, particularly those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS prevalence is very high in this area and there are roughly 1,600 children who have been orphaned by the syndrome. Despite the widespread level of infection, stigma and depression are real challenges facing those who are HIV positive. This community situation led BHSSC to seek the assistance of the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG). SADAG was very supportive of our work and responded immediately to our call for assistance.

On 22 August 2008 SADAG conducted a wonderful workshop for over 100 Acornhoek community members including BHSSC community caregivers, local teachers, clinic staff, and spiritual leaders. Workshop attendees have raved to me on how much they learned about depression, suicide and other mental health matters as related to HIV/AIDS. They also received certificates which offered attendees a real sense of pride. One caregiver stated "I learned so much about depression and really feel that I can help my patients and community to take better care of their mental health."

In addition to facilitating this wonderful workshop, SADAG generously donated many of its speaking books on HIV/AIDS and depression. These speaking books, particularly those in Sotho, are a tremendous asset to our work in the community. The books even helped a number of BHSSC caregivers to have better access to their community. Once word got out that BHSSC patients with HIV/AIDS were given these innovative books, caregivers were actively sought out by community members who disclosed their status. The books will have a long-lasting effect of decreasing stigma associated with HIV/AIDS and opening the door up to better psychosocial support for those affected.

BHSSC is extremely grateful for the wonderful services rendered by the South African Depression and Anxiety Group.

Sincerely,

Rose Zulliger

Orphan & Vulnerable Children Coordinator
Bushbuckridge Health & Social Services Consortium
United States Peace Corps Volunteer