

Uplifting our youth - let's do it ourselves

Writer
Hedda Mittner

For over four years, Elaine Davie has been an invaluable contributor to The Village NEWS, keeping our readers entertained and informed on everything happening in the Overstrand, from community issues to education, the environment, books and the arts.

As someone who says she's "adopted causes all my life", one of Elaine's strengths as a journalist has always been her dedication to giving a voice to the voiceless and presenting the perspective of the disenfranchised.

"During my time with The Village NEWS I tried to write stories that I felt needed to be heard," she says. "Stories that highlight the needs of the community and the many individuals and NGOs that are doing things for their community; without waiting for the government to fix things, they simply do it themselves."

Perhaps it takes one to know one as Elaine herself is one of those individuals. Last month she was appointed as the new Abagold Development Trust Liaison Officer – a position to which she is ideally suited. "I will miss the newspaper, especially all the inspiring people I met and wrote about, but I'm also very grateful for this opportunity to get back into community work and to make a practical difference," she says.

Since its establishment in 1995, Abagold has grown into a large company, currently employing over 400 staff members, but has also thrown its net wider by playing an integral role in the local community.

With the majority of its employees coming from the previously disadvantaged communities of Zwelihle, Mount Pleasant and Hawston, where they live and raise their children, the founders of Abagold decided in 2010 to establish a Trust to support these local communities, particularly in the areas of education, training, developmental projects and job creation.

Now in its 12th year, the Abagold Development Trust has a board of trustees representing the company as well as community leaders from the surrounding areas. Encouraged by the difference they have been able to make in the lives of talented youngsters who would otherwise never have had the opportunity to develop their potential, the Trust is eager to expand its outreach and encourage as many local businesses as possible to engage in funding partnerships with the Trust.

"A cornerstone of the Trust is Early Childhood Development (ECD)," explains Elaine. "This came about as a direct result of Abagold taking an interest in their employees' circumstances, especially those who have pre-school children." While the initial vision was to establish an ECD centre for Abagold employees' children, the decision was subsequently made to support existing ECD centres in the various communities, thereby reaching many more children.

Elaine's experience in this field is considerable, starting back in the late 1980s when she became involved with SOS Children's Villages and went on to establish her own ECD training programme called Small Beginnings, launching several training centres around the Northern and Eastern Transvaal. As national co-ordinator, she played a pivotal role in establishing the SA Association for Early Childhood Educare (SAAECE) and served as a member of the National Committee for Children's Rights.

Her success at securing funding from local corporates and international foundations later led to Liberty Life recruiting her to set up the Southern African Grantmakers' Association (SAGA), to bring funders, government departments and NGOs together. More recently, after relocating



Elaine Davie (far right), liaison officer of the Abagold Development Trust, with (from left) Abagold HR Manager and ADT trustee Varsti Coert, Abagold financial controller and ADT chairperson Phindile Kubheka, and Abagold CFO and ADT trustee Enver Manchest.

PHOTO: Hedda Mittner

to the Overberg, Elaine was involved in fundraising for the Enlighten Education Trust and Camphill School.

Abagold's commitment to childhood development is based on the belief that it is particularly crucial in the early years of a child's life and provides a strong foundation which has long-term benefits for children from disadvantaged and low-income households. ECD not only supports secondary educational success and the ability to study further and secure employment, it also impacts children's social and emotional health.

"For optimal childhood development, more than just a healthy environment is required. A child needs supportive experiences, nourishment, active stimulation and a safe world in which to flourish. By investing in ECD we are not only enabling the development of our youth but directly contributing to the socio-economic health of all our communities in the beautiful Hermanus area," says Abagold CEO Tim Hedges.

In collaboration with the Enlighten Education Project, Sustainable Futures, Sparklekids, Just Care Aftercare and various schools in the area, the Trust facilitates teachers' professional development and in-class support in dozens of local ECD centres, while also providing scholarships for individual learners. High school students who show potential for tertiary education are identified and supported through bursaries and opportunities for job-shadowing.

An exciting new initiative is the Luvo Maranti Arts Scholarship which was inspired by the talented young tenor from Zwelihle it was named after. Luvo originally studied Human Resources Management at Fort Hare University and, in the holidays following the completion of his degree, he was appointed as an intern at Abagold in Hermanus. Here it was soon discovered that he was a singer with extraordinary potential and was put in charge of the Abagold Choir.

Learning of his dream to become a professional opera singer, Tim decided to take him under his wing and helped him raise funds for food and accommodation, which, added to a bursary from the university, enabled him to enrol at the UCT College of Music's Opera School for a three-year Performer's Diploma, while continuing to work at Abagold as an intern during the holidays.

Here, too, Elaine's past experience makes her the ideal person for the job. She not only

studied and taught drama but also worked for the former PACT (Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal), writing children's plays and developing educational programmes for PACT's Theatre-in-Education Company. She says she has had a love of opera music since her student days at the Maas Phillips College of Speech and Drama in Cape Town (now the Cape Academy of Dramatic Art), when the students did the stage make-up for the numerous opera productions presented by Cape Town's renowned Eoan Opera Group.

Luvo has done exceptionally well over the past three years, obtaining distinctions in all his subjects except Music Theory, which he still needs to complete. At the same time, he has been performing whenever he has the opportunity, both as a soloist and a founder member of the Ten Tenors group. In March Luvo was the star performer, along with soprano Lynelle Kenned and the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra, at the FynArts Sunset Concert in the Old Harbour, and more recently performed in a concert hosted by Overstrand Arts/Kunste in the Dutch Reformed Church in Hermanus.

His success has been the inspiration for the Luvo Maranti Arts Scholarship, which will identify one arts student per year from the wider Overstrand community to help them realise their dream of studying at tertiary level, be it in music, art, architecture, ballet, theatre, literature or filmmaking. Applications can be sent to elaine@abagolddevelopmenttrust.co.za.

While Elaine pursues yet another new career path – at the age of 82, nogal! – we will miss her dearly but are hopeful that her name will not disappear entirely from The Village NEWS' pages. "I have written all through my life, in one form or another," she says, "from editing the school newspaper to writing magazine features, internal newsletters, marketing material, children's plays, radio programmes, television scripts and academic conference papers... It is in my blood and I hope to continue."

The Village NEWS wishes Elaine everything of the best in her new position. Visit www.abagold.com to learn more about the Abagold Development Trust and how you can become involved.

APPLY TODAY



ABOUT THE SCHOLARSHIP

The Luvo Maranti Arts Scholarship was launched in 2022 by a young tenor from the community of Zwelihle in the Overstrand under the administrative umbrella of the Abagold Development Trust. It is intended to identify one arts student per year from the wider Overstrand community and help that individual realise his/her dream of studying the arts at tertiary level.

The applicants will be interviewed with the opportunity to study a post-secondary level in their chosen field.

The categories include drama and theatre arts, music, painting, sculpture, literature, architecture, film and dance.

The value of the Arts Scholarship that will be awarded is up to R100,000 for each academic year to cover any gaps in tuition, accommodation, subsistence and a small stipend.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Resident in the Overstrand.
- Applicants from disadvantaged communities will be given preference.
- Satisfactory academic and behavioural school record.
- Preliminary registration and acceptance at the tertiary institution of choice.

APPLICATIONS CLOSE

15 NOVEMBER 2022

APPLICATION PROCESS

APPLICATION FORM CAN BE FOUND AT:

- www.abagold.com/about/csi/LuvoMarantiScholarship/ OR
- Scan below
- A resumé reflecting any relevant information not covered in the application form.
- Preliminary registration and acceptance at the tertiary institution of choice.
- Please send your fully completed application to elaine@abagolddevelopmenttrust.co.za

GET IN TOUCH

elaine@abagolddevelopmenttrust.co.za

028 313 0253

www.abagold.com/about/csi/LuvoMarantiScholarship/

