We are very very proud: Nemato Change a Life is now on the National Geographic NewsWatch website!
Is there a better place to be?

How a Sports Club Is Changing Lives in South Africa

By Anne Meltzer and Jan Blohm, Nemato Change a Life

The loop of poverty and apathy persists in the townships of post-apartheid South Africa—but for some youth, there may be a way out.

The Nelson Mandela township looms over Port Alfred, South Africa, a community steeped in pollution, overpopulation, poverty, and apathy. The majority of the roughly 25,000 inhabitants have been enduring the effects of apartheid for decades, including poor healthcare, housing, education, and employment opportunities. The newest generation of school-aged children is challenging these circumstances with their own muscle. Nemato Change a Life is a grassroots community-empowerment organization founded in 2006 that uses athletics as a tool to overcome the apathy that persists in this rural township. Below, the organization’s founder, Jan Blohm, shares his experiences starting and growing Nemato Change a Life.
National Geographic

We are very proud: Nemato Change a Life is now on the National Geographic NewsWatch website! Is there a better place to be? Click here to visit the website. Thank you Annie for making it happen!

National Lottery

The National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund (NLDTF) has allocated over half a million Rand to our sports clubs: rowing gymnastics and fencing. Fantastic news! Thanks a lot Lotto! For more details, read under the sports clubs.

Work hard, be nice

Working hard and being nice is not something that comes naturally in our communities. There are not many role models helping our youth into the right direction, and unfortunately lots of the opposite. For a whole month during the holiday we have been doing daily lessons on the theme “work hard, be nice”. That theme comes from the KIPP Schools, that offer highly successful education to disadvantaged youth in the USA. Some sessions were workshops, including one where members had to tell tell what is nice about the other. For many this was a very new and nice experience. The question “Am I nice?” is still going around. Is it helping? Yes! Are we done? No, this is an ongoing challenge! We'll keep working on it.

Renovation

It's difficult to keep our small (RDP) house in good condition. With about 70 members using the facility, it's heavily overcrowded and an hour after cleaning it's dirty again. To make the place look a little bit better and to make cleaning easier, we painted it with washable paint. If you don't look at the floor, the place looks quite nice now. Hopefully we'll find an affordable way to improve the floor too.

Residential

William Cahill and Jessica Pollock visited us for a week during the holiday. They helped us with all sorts of activities: coaching, maths lessons, bookkeeping and much more. It was their residential week for the Gold President's Award (Duke of Edinburgh Award), taking participants for a week to an environment outside of their comfort zone. We must say, these two had very little difficulty adapting to our hectic place. We wish them good luck with all the other activities they have to complete for their award. We already have a next ‘booking’ for a residential. Are you doing The Gold President's Award? You are most welcome to do your residential with us!

Help us

We closed our Food Fund account. Most donors use our general bank account. The costs to keep the Food Fund account open were too high for the limited number of donations paid into this account. Please donate to the Nemato Change a Life account, FNB Port Alfred, account number 6225 665 9461, with reference 'food fund' for food donations. You can also donate to us on the BackaBuddy website.

Do you have pre-school toys or workshop tools and machines in good condition, but you don't use them any more? Make us happy: drop them off at our place, or at our stall at the Kowie Festival on 24 September at the Rosehill Mall in Port Alfred, or send us a parcel. Our address is: Nemato Change a Life, 12 Lindani Straat, Nemato, Port Alfred, 6170. No international parcels please, high import duties make it too expensive.

Thanks a lot to Nemato Spar for helping us! They are giving us discount on our shopping.

Lottery

Nemato Rowing Club will receive funding from the Lottery (NLDTF) for equipment, including a new quad, a boat for four rowers and a cox. It's great news! All our big boats (quad and eight) are ten years old, and if we don't start replacing, we'll end up without boats in a couple of years time.
Nemato Sculls Head
Our own rowing competition, the Nemato Sculls Head, will take place on Saturday 23 August. We are expecting participants from at least three rowing clubs from the Eastern Cape. It’s tough long distance race for single sculls, over the same course as Boat Race.

Indo Pacific Champs
Three Nemato gymnasts (Siphamandla Baku, Onke Mangele and Siphokuhle Nyoka) participated at the international Indo Pacific Championships in Sun City in South Africa. The best result was a forth place by Siphamandla in tumbling.

Eastern Cape Champs
The provincial championships are also trials for the South African Gymnastic Games in Cape Town. Nemato dominated many of the higher age groups and levels boys events, but the most impressive performance came from the young Nemato gymnast Khanyile Mbolekwa, who stole the show with beautiful routines on the trampoline. He was the only Eastern Cape gymnast jumping the highest level (five) in the boys age group 9 to 10. It’s clear we have another gymnast who can go international. Thank you Stenden for transporting us!

Trampoline
Our gymnastics club is the most successful and at the same time most under-equipped of our clubs. We don’t have a whitetop (euro) trampoline and have to train on a blacktop beginners’ trampoline that doesn’t have enough bounce to do difficult routines. All our gymnasts compete on whitetop, but we have to travel to Port Elizabeth to train on it. The fantastic news is that the Lottery will donate us money to buy a whitetop trampoline! Our next challenge is to get a gymnastics hall for it.

Ergo sessions
Strength and fitness are not the strongest side of our gymnasts. To improve we introduced ergo sessions: fitness training on what is probably the best and toughest of all fitness machines: the rowing ergometer.

Eastern Cape Senior Trials
We were invited to senior trials in Grahamstown for the Eastern Cape team. We had a girls team and a boys team playing. It was a bit tough for our junior teams to compete against the strongest senior teams in the Eastern Cape. There were three girls teams and six boys teams. Our most successful player was our goal keeper Mbiko Nxonxuba, who was selected into the final trials and just missed out of the Eastern Cape team. Soon we’ll participate in the junior trials.

Bonnievale competition
Our fencing team is on its way back from a competition in Bonnievale. It’s far: about 750km from Port Alfred. It’s worth all the travelling, it’s one of the few competitions in the country that accommodates our mostly very young fencers.

Lottery
Our fencing club will receive funding for all sorts of fencing equipment that will allow us to grow our club. We also hope to be able to assist at least one other township fencing club to get up and running and ready for competitions.

Gymnasts training on ergos

Our best handball player goal keeper Mbiko

Nemato Change a Life is proud member of:  

Change a life
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**Our supporters**

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