



Take Heart

Old Girl's Newsletter

June 2021

Welcome

Welcome to the 2nd edition of our St John's D.S.G. Old Girls' Newsletter, *Take Heart*.

We are already halfway through the year and it feels like we have been living with the craziness of Covid-19 for more than just a year! So much has changed and yet so much is still the same.

The Old Girls' Association has had to put so many events on hold this year (and last) and as a result are so are looking forward to a time when we are able to meet up again; spending time with one another reminiscing about our special times shared.

Amongst all this uncertainty and change, I encourage you to stop and 'take heart' of all the positive stories around you. Enjoy the read!

Lucy Kewley (Chairlady of the Old Girls' Association)



Lucy (middle) and her two sisters, (right) Amanda (left) Annabelle

Heart-to-Heart



Last year we introduced a monthly feature titled, "Heart-to-Heart" where we catch up with an Old Girl to find out where she is in life and what she has been doing since leaving school.

These features are published on the St John's D.S.G. website: www.stjohnsdsg.com under the "Old Girls" tab and links to these articles are shared on our social media pages. Below are snippets of two recent articles:

HEART-TO-HEART WITH AALIA SHARIFF

Old Girl, Aalia Shariff (Class of 2002), is a kind, compassionate and ambitious lady, whose friends describe her as goal-orientated and self-driven. Aalia is currently working as a Registered Nurse devoting her time on the frontline in the Intensive Care Unit at Alberta Hospital, Canada. Not only does Aalia dedicate her time to caring for sick patients, but she also teaches part-time at the Nursing Program at Alberta Hospital, passing on her vast knowledge and skills to the Nursing students enrolled.

Aalia moved to Canada in 2002 and has lived there ever since. Having worked in Paediatrics and ICU in the only hospital in Haiti, Aalia described this as one of her most humbling experiences. During that same year, she pursued a Masters of Nursing and shortly after she graduated, she published her first journal article in the Canadian Journal of Critical Care Nursing.

What did you love most about St John's D.S.G?

As a boarder from Kenya being so far away from my family, at such a tender age was certainly not easy. However, St John's D.S.G. fostered a sense of belonging and the tight knit community enabled me to establish some wonderful friendships. I was particularly grateful for my classmates and their families who welcomed me into their homes, as this made my holidays and weekends feel a little less lonely. My Matric year was my favourite! Matric girls were given all sorts of privileges, working up an appetite for responsibility and independence. I love that participating in sports was an integral part of our education. This taught me the importance of work-life balance and exposed me to activities I may not have otherwise experienced. Most of all, I loved the camps we went on, where I was given an opportunity to explore the beauty of South Africa and participate in all kinds of fun activities.



HEART-TO-HEART WITH LEANNE LONG

Leanne Long (née van der Leeuw, Class of 1981) is a busy and energetic lady with a great enthusiasm for life! She lives in Bedfordshire, England with her husband, Tim, an Educational Psychologist, as well as her two dogs, Yoda and Scooby, and cat, Ruby. Leanne is a mom to two twenty-something-year-old daughters, Kate and Amy. Kate is currently studying towards her Masters in International Relations at Durham University and Amy is at college doing Outdoor Adventure.

Leanne works for World Vision, a global poverty relief and development charity, where she leads on Culture and Capability (which roughly translates to leadership, performance management, development, communications, faith at work and organisational ethos.)

Leanne enjoys running her local Parkrun on weekends, baking (and eating!) up a storm in the kitchen and getting involved at church, which she describes as being "big and lively!" She has recently completed an MSc in Strategy, Leadership and Change and is a trustee of several charities, including Food Bank. The Long family love camping and hiking in the Lake District, and Leanne's ultimate dream is someday retiring there to run a café!



What did you love most about St John's D.S.G?

It was small enough that you could get involved in everything – so I did! Sport (even the ones I wasn't very good at), music, social concern outreach, chapel, even a bit of academics now and then. The then brand new, state-of-the-art Theatre was my happy place – Drama, school plays, public speaking, debating... but I must say that I was also quite keen on the socials we used to have with the various boys' schools!

For more "Heart-to-Heart" articles, please head straight to the website: www.stjohnsdsg.com/oldgirls

Area Ambassadors



SOUTH AFRICA

Hilton/PMB Area: Mary Millward (née Quicke - 1985) info@dusi.co.za
Nombulelo Zulu (2014) bulelombanjwa@gmail.com

Midlands/Kamberg/Notties:

Kelly Sivright (née Gaylard - 1999) kelly@glengarry.co.za

Winterton/Bergville:

Lindsay Du Plessis (née Carte - 2002) lindsaycarte@gmail.com

Durban:

Puvithra Naidoo (1991) puvithra@me.com

KZN North Coast:

Kirsty Heath (née Bowles - 2002) bowlzie@hotmail.com

KZN South Coast:

Geneé Kilgour (née Liedenbergh - 1987) kilgour@mweb.co.za

Gauteng/JHB Area:

Grace Buthelezi (2014) fanelegrace@gmail.com
Nombulelo Zulu (2014) bulelombanjwa@gmail.com
Candice Seggie (née Leo-Smith - 2000) candiceseggie@gmail.com

INTERNATIONAL

U.K. (London):

Christina Haralambous (2000) christine.haralambous@gmail.com

USA & Canada:

Paula Owen (née Munro – 1996) info@paulaowen.ca

Australia (Sydney):

Lauren Tischendorf (1998) lm Tischendorf@gmail.com

UNIVERSITY REPS

Wits:

Nana Mwenechanya (2017) nanamwene@gmail.com
Nombulelo Zulu (2014) bulelombanjwa@gmail.com

Tuks:

Michelle Niebuhr (2017) michelleniebuhr@gmail.com



What our Old Girls have been up to...

SHIRLEY CAREY

It was so special to welcome back Old Girl, Shirley Carey (née Symons, Class of 1993) to present the trophies at this year's St John's D.S.G. Relay Gala. The tradition whereby the Swimming Captain's mom is invited as the guest of honour to hand out the trophies has been around for many years, but what made this year extra special, was that Mrs Symons (Shirley's mom), who herself handed out the trophies in 1993 when Shirley was the St John's D.S.G. Swimming Captain, was able to be there to witness her daughter present the trophies to the swimmers as the 2021 Swimming Captain's mom!



MAKING HISTORY

We were delighted to hear of the recent achievement of Old Girl, Lauren Tischendorf, who became the first woman to swim solo (in a single swim of 35km in treacherous water) around Lord Howe Island off the Coast of Australia.

Lauren, who now teaches in Sydney, Australia, says, "Given the year we've had, my goal has been to promote the strength of women and the human spirit as well as highlight the unique biodiversity of this UNESCO island situated off the east coast of Australia in the Tasman sea."



*Click here to follow
Lauren's journey*



Well done Lauren. We are so incredibly proud of your achievement.

ZANDRIA ELDER

Zandria Elder (née Saayman, Class of 2013) married Kelvin on 24 October 2020 at the exquisite Brahman Hills in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands. Three of her bridesmaids were St John's D.S.G. Old Girls and Mrs Humphrey, Zandria's Biology teacher whilst at school, did the wedding flowers. St John's D.S.G. truly does give you friends for all chapters of your life.



FRANCIS MACKENZIE

Francis MacKenzie (née Bam, Class of 2011) married Callum at Cranford Country Lodge in December last year. All four of her bridesmaids were St John's D.S.G. Old Girls. How special!



LIKE MOTHER, LIKE DAUGHTER

We love it when Old Girl's choose St John's D.S.G. as the school of choice for their daughters. Pictured here is Clair Small (née Goosen, Class of 2003) on her first day of Grade 1 as well as her daughter Zara, on her first day of Grade RR in January this year. Some of Clair's closest friends today are the friends she made at school and her wish for Zara is that she has the same amazing experience and makes as many special friends as she did when she was at St John's D.S.G.



30 UNDER 30

South African social media influencer and St John's D.S.G. Old Girl, Mhlali Ndamase (Class of 2014) has been included in the Forbes Africa "30 under 30" winners list for 2021 for her hard work and dedication in the make-up industry.

Mhlali says, "I've been doing this for a couple of years now, not that long. Also to be 24 and be recognised by a platform like Forbes is a major, major deal." Well done Mhlali. We are so incredibly proud of you!



Mhlali Ndamase (pictured in the yellow dress) on the front cover of Forbes Africa Magazine



KYLIE VAN KOEVERING

Kylie van Koevinger matriculated from St John's D.S.G. in 2015 and has recently graduated from Loyola University in Chicago, USA with her Masters in Social Work. Kylie hopes to begin a doctorate once she gains a little more work experience. Congratulations Kylie. All the very best for your new job.



REUNITING ABROAD

Pictured here are two of our youngest "Old Girls", Erin Skidmore and Lucy Barraclough, who have been reunited in Auckland, New Zealand after both their families recently immigrated. Their St John's D.S.G. teddy bears even joined in on their play date!

125th Celebrations. The count down begins...

Next year, St John's D.S.G. will be celebrating their 125th birthday. There are lots of exciting functions in the pipeline and we would like to encourage as many Old Girls to consider returning to Pietermaritzburg for some of these events. Details will be released in due course and published on the school website, www.stjohnsdsg.com/oldgirls. Please keep an eye out so you can plan accordingly. Its going to be a fantastic year of celebrating our amazing school.



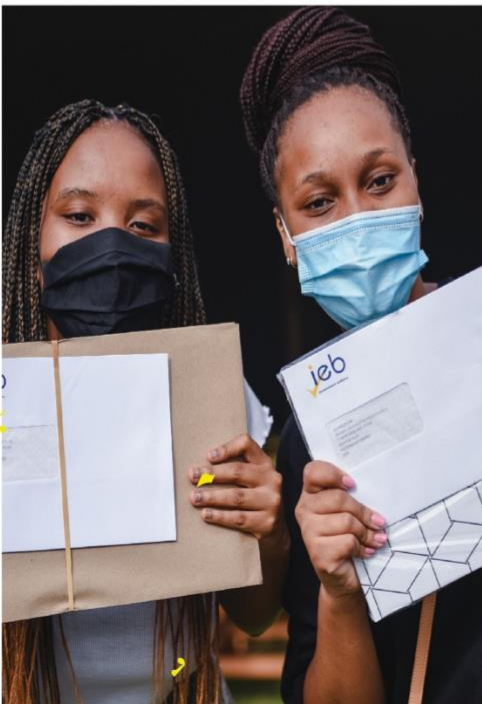
125 YEARS OF
big heart (1897 - 2022)

2020 Matrics Making History

The Matric class of 2020 did themselves proud, achieving extraordinary results which are the best in the school's 123-year history! Here are some of their main achievements:

- ♥ 62 candidates wrote and achieved 100% Bachelor Degree passes.
- ♥ There were 166 subject Level 7 symbols (80% or more). This is 38,1% of the total symbols and a 7,5% increase on the 2019 results.
- ♥ There were 160 subject Level 6 symbols (70 – 79 %). This means that 74,8% of all marks were 70% or higher. This too is an increase of over 9% from 2019.
- ♥ The girls achieved an average of 3 distinctions per candidate, with 54 girls achieving at least 1 distinction.
- ♥ On average the girls achieved 5 Level 6 or 7 passes per candidate.

In total, 25 girls achieved A aggregates (over 80% average in all subjects) and 22 candidates achieved B aggregates (70 – 79%). This means that 75,8% of girls achieved A or B aggregates, which surpasses the record set by the 2018 Matrics by 12%. The average overall mark achieved was 75%. Mr Tyson, St John's D.S.G.'s Head of Academics says, "2020 was an extraordinary year with Covid-19 closing schools and forcing teaching and learning to go online. Both the girls and staff rose to the occasion and adapted and learned new skills to help adjust to the new normal that we have all had to get used to. Despite these challenges, the Matrics of 2020 have done themselves and the school proud, achieving extraordinary results which equate with the best we have ever had. For this, the 2020 Matrics and staff are applauded."



Current News from St John's D.S.G.

STAFF WHO ARE OLD GIRLS

St John's D.S.G. has the privilege of having 10 Old Girls currently on their staff and 4 of these staff members currently have daughters at St John's D.S.G.

Jane Cole-Edwardes (née Rogers – 2002) – Old Girls' Liaison

Kate Martens (née Gordon – 2002) – Marketing Design Co-Ordinator

Naomi Hardman (née Gee – 1993) – Business Manager

Vanessa Gurney (née Hay – 1989) – Grade 6 Maths & Science Teacher



Cara Schirge (née Stewart – 1998) – Senior P.E. Teacher and Sports Co-Ordinator

Christy Meyer (née Gebers – 2008) – Maths and Business Studies Teacher/Intern

Lezaan Fourie (2014) – Senior Primary Intern

Natalie Esteves (2014) – History/English Teacher and Sports Coach

Jacqui Keevy-Muir (née Keevy – 1998) – Head of Dramatic Arts

Heather Evans (née Lipsett – 1988) – Events and Functions Co-Ordinator

Kelly Fjelivik (2017) - Boarder Mistress and Hockey Coach



2021 MATRIC THEME

This year the Matric Theme is "TOGETHER." We recently caught up with 2021 Head Girl, Jodi Jeffreys, to tell us more. Jodi says, "After a long year [2020] of uncertainty and being confined to our homes, people found themselves losing their purpose and identities. This year's theme will help us to bring back unity and authenticity within our community. The aim of this theme is to encourage the girls to first take time to understand themselves and others, we want to focus on being empathetic and reminding the girls that everyone has their own stories and beliefs. Once they have achieved this, they will be able to stand up for themselves and the people around them. We want to remind the girls that we don't have to strive to fit into the moulds built by society, but rather stand out and be authentic. By the end of the year, we hope that the girls can take what they have learnt, stand tall and be confident in who they are, knowing we are all in this TOGETHER!"

ST JOHN'S D.S.G. A SCHOOL OF CHOICE!

Including the Grade 7 class, St John's D.S.G. had nearly 200 applications for places in Grade 8, 2022, the highest number on record. Mr Simon Moore, St John's D.S.G. Principal says, "We are clearly a school of choice, for which I am grateful to our girls and staff and I'm happy to report that we have had more than 80 excited acceptances."

A GRAND OPENING

At the end of last term, St John's D.S.G. celebrated the grand opening of the new classroom and reception block with a ribbon cutting ceremony. It was a special evening spent honouring those who worked so hard to get this magnificent building completed.

Mr Reg Zammit, who has lovingly served on the St John's D.S.G.'s Board of Governors for almost 34 years and who now sits as Vice-Chairman, said during his opening speech, "This beautiful building will probably be the iconic image that the school presents to the world. Its outer beauty is obvious, but there is definitely an inner beauty of St John's D.S.G. and that is manifested in its caring and nurturing nature which has been a dominant characteristic since its founding by the Sisters of St John the Divine over 120 years ago. I believe that it is this ethos of caring and nurturing that has allowed St John's D.S.G. to survive through both good and bad times and why so many people who have experienced the school just fall in love with it."



This building has provided the school with:

- 12 classrooms
- An upgraded lecture theatre
- A new state-of-the-art resource centre
- A team-teaching venue, which can accommodate a whole grade
- Staff offices
- A meeting room
- A beautiful reception area
- In addition, our theatre reception and Mr Moore's (Principal) office have been upgraded and an interview waiting area created.

The project started in December 2019, and continued into a year that was possibly one of the most challenging for many. However, with lots of hard work and dedication from the St John's D.S.G. community, contractors, builders and their teams, the school managed to have it ready just in time for the start of the 2021 year!



Reunions

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, we had to make the difficult decision to cancel our 2021 Old Girls' Weekend. We are, however, planning on having smaller regional gatherings later on in the year. We have the class of 2001, 2010 and 2011 currently planning their reunions which will hopefully be able to go ahead in the next few months. If you would like to organise a class reunion, please let Jane Cole-Edwardes (St John's D.S.G. Old Girls' Liaison) know on oldgirls@stjohnsdsg.com. She will be more than happy to assist you with this.

With regards to our 2022 Old Girls' Weekend, we are planning on having it in early May, 2022. We look forward to welcoming as many Old Girls back to celebrate the schools 125th Birthday. Please keep a lookout on all social media platforms and our website for more information regarding Old Girls gatherings, the 2022 Old Girls' Weekend and the 125th Birthday functions.

Keep up to date

If you aren't already following our St John's D.S.G. Old Girls' social media pages, please do so, we are on Facebook and Instagram. This is where we keep you up to date with what our Old Girls are up to as well as any important information with regards to reunions, date changes and future events.

If social media isn't your thing, the Old Girls section on the St John's D.S.G. website allows for easy access to the latest Old Girls' news, information and upcoming events. Our website is www.stjohnsdsg.com.

Update contact details

We would love to get in touch with all our special Old Girls. Please take a minute and click the link below to update your contact details.

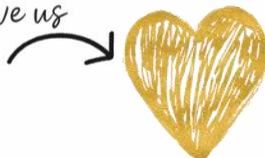
Click here to
update your details



Feedback

We would love to receive feedback with regards to our newsletters. Please could you complete the form, by clicking on the link below, to give us some ideas as to what you would like to see featured.

Click here to give us
your feedback



Not online?

We know that not everyone has access to online resources, so if you know of an Old Girl who would benefit from information being posted to her, please email Jane Cole-Edwardes, (St John's D.S.G. Old Girls' Liaison), on oldgirls@stjohnsdsg.com with their name and postal address.