



HILTON COLLEGE

*A letter from*

# The Head

*No.20-15 /10 November 2020*

Dear Parents,

## Surprised

In a world that feeds off bad news and sensational negativity, positive moments are like a balm to our souls. If we are honest, we need to find and celebrate the positive more. Beautiful things are always there, perhaps they don't announce themselves as loudly, nor are they egotistic, nor do they necessarily require our attention to give them purpose.

Beautiful people are similar; not seekers of loud applause, nor reliant on podium finishes, not in it for themselves. Beautiful people perform acts of kindness quietly, often and simply. Their acts reflect an inner strength and an understanding that this life is richer when lived in community alongside others.

One of my greatest joys is when one of my own children carries out an act of service, or of generosity, unsolicited and unprompted. The aim is to try and ensure that these acts become regular - a way of being - such that in adulthood this will be a mark of their character.

I'm not sure how one develops this practice in a world that presents as being only about oneself - at all costs and at almost every opportunity. Indeed, many of our systems are structured to celebrate the individual - after all, it's the 'best' individual who gets all the accolades in most things in our world. There are, however, some examples of different constructs that highlight another approach.

At Starehe Boys' Centre in Nairobi, the boys (over 1000 of them) have day duties to clean their school from 06:30 - 07:00 in the morning, before breakfast. The boys sweep the school's roads, they help in the kitchen, they clean admin offices, they wash cars and busses. This regimen aims to teach every boy the necessity of service.

At the Midland School in Los Olives, California, prep school children are responsible for several aspects of the running of their school: pupils collect firewood, then chop it to feed the fire that heats the hot water for showers. At Midland, each year group is responsible for a new solar installation to draw another 3% of the school's electricity requirement from the sun. Furthermore, about 50% of the produce that pupils and staff eat comes from 10 acres of land the students farm organically.

Do these two schools possibly do something we don't, yet should?

One of the unique and compelling advantages we enjoy is our environment and location; thanks to the foresight and generosity of our founders. Our estate and farming operations are differentiators that are possibly unrivalled worldwide.

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What Covid-19 has taught us is that our boys explored the estate far more given the time they had at their disposal, with no formal sport allowed. This has raised the question as to whether we are best exploiting the staggering opportunities our location offers. The competitive nature of academic, cultural and sporting success, and the time these disciplines demand limits our scope somewhat but perhaps our metrics need realignment?

As our world hurtles towards a precipice on matters of sustainability and thus into new modes of being as we also try and solve the question of inequality in society - perhaps two of the greatest challenges of our time - we need to recalibrate and adopt some practices that will help our young men in adopting a different approach to living to ensure our longevity and perhaps our survival.

The danger we face as Hiltonians and the broader Hilton community is that of becoming 'prisoners of privilege'. We must guard against this. Perhaps by being more intentional about doing less for our boys we may unlock their innate ability to help us solve some of these vexing problems now and into the future. If we are always doing everything for our sons, the messaging to them is that someone else will always serve them.

On Friday evening I had the privilege of 'judging' a group of our boys' projects as part of a Sygnature Skills Programme, piloted this year under the direction of Mr Alexei du Bois and in partnership with Roots2Resilience and the Impact Trust. Thirteen boys in Grades 9 -11 took part in this pilot and explored projects that would address and deliver solutions in answer to one or more of the Sustainable Development Goals established by the UN.

**Cameron Gray** and **Kristofer Watt** worked on a solution to enhance business opportunities for budding entrepreneurs across Southern Africa through an innovative App that would aim to reduce the inequality gap, given that this inequality gap is often the result of one's circumstances rather than one's aptitude.

**Gus Herridge**, **Luke Hancock** and **Gabriel Njonjo** formulated a detailed plan to introduce Hydroponics to less privileged spaces, ensuring food security and enabling job creation.

**Richard Karlson**, **Matt Sara** and **Nhlako Mntambo** worked on the proposal of the formulation of a boys' committee at Hilton College to tackle the challenge of Sustainability in as many areas as may be possible. The team highlighted energy, waste and our carbon footprint. This is an outstanding idea which supports my thinking of finding a way to change our behavior now and into the future.

**Jack Waterhouse**, **Ben Kok** and **Chris Bagnall** explored the possibility of addressing the inequality in educational offerings for many South Africans by beginning a service project which would rely on Hilton boys teaching less privileged and younger children from disadvantaged schooling environments. This would create opportunities for boys to complete Community Service hours whilst giving to others from the wellspring of talents that our boys have.

**Khanya Mhlongo**, **Ryan Basson** and **Matt Rout** have explored the opportunity to be a Carbon Neutral Consultancy, beginning with Hilton College and branching out as a young team, able to audit firms and advise them on how best to become Carbon Neutral.

All these projects are ambitious and full of promise and hope for our future. The programme was designed to teach boys about the challenges facing our planet whilst equipping them with tools to create solutions in the spheres that excite them and wherein they believe they can make a difference.

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These may be small initiatives but when combined make a world of difference. Mr du Bois and Mrs Dry are working on a way to grow this programme for a wider audience of boys in 2021.

With all our resource, can we become THE model school in setting an example in responsible living such that others will follow? Or will our very resource be our Achilles' heel and prevent us from establishing best practice initiatives that may take some more effort and commitment?

## **STAFFING CHANGES**

There have been a few changes in House Mastering posts for 2021. These have come about for a varied set of reasons:

**Churchill:** **Mr Ernie Steenkamp** has finished his stint as Housemaster where he has done exceptionally well. His unique style has endeared him to many boys and he leaves Churchill in a very positive way. His successor is **Mr Devon van der Merwe**, who has been Deputy Housemaster in Lucas House. Mr van der Merwe has been our 1<sup>st</sup> Team Hockey coach and he has many years of housemastering experience both at Hilton and previously at Maritzburg College.

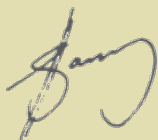
**Ellis:** **Mr Tony Richter** has been promoted to the role of Director of School Operations from 2021. Mr Richter has years of experience in boys' schools and his steady hand will continue to assist us in delivering the best product we can deliver by ensuring that all the parts of the machine work together smoothly. Mr Richter also leaves Ellis in a very positive way and he too will be missed by many boys in Ellis. His successor is **Mr Burger Nel**, who has been Deputy Housemaster in Ellis for the past few years. Mr Nel is well liked by the boys and has a significant heart for caring for adolescent boys and providing them the best opportunity to be all they can be in the future. Mr Nel will be ably supported by **Mr Sipho Buys**, who will join our team as a Drama teacher in January 2021.

**Falcon:** **Mr Chris Kingsley** has decided to change his professional journey as he opts to focus on his non-profit organization birthed in part out of the successful "Tries for Lives" initiative he implemented at Hilton a couple of years ago. Mr Kingsley, and Ali, know that they are called to make a difference beyond the classroom and this decision has been in the making for some time now. However, we will still benefit from Mr Kingsley's presence by having him teach English to a few classes in 2021. Mr Kingsley will be succeeded by **Mr Kwanda Sibiya**, as the new Housemaster of Falcon. Mr Sibiya has been Deputy Housemaster in Falcon for the past year and he has done a superb job in this role.

**Mr AC Blume** assumes the role of Senior Housemaster, as Mr Richter moves into his new role. I know Mr Blume will bring terrific energy to this role as we work towards continuing to 'do boarding' in the best possible manner at Hilton College.

It is wonderful to have many very competent staff who can grow into these demanding roles from among our ranks. I have full confidence in their capacity to do an outstanding job going forward.

Regards,



George Harris  
Headmaster