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PINELANDS COMMUNITY MAGAZINE

ISSUE 165 | September 2025

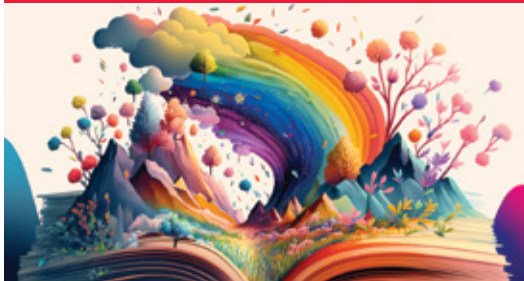


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Education Special Feature



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Muse editor, Max Schutte exploring the new section of the cliff path in Hermanus



Sombre Greenbull

The Sombre Greenbull is a medium size bird with olive green upper-parts and olive grey underparts. The white eye ring makes one think of a large white-eye.

This bird is more often heard than seen. The call is a ringing wi-lle followed by a rapid jumble of notes ending in a nasal, querulous note (willie, come-out and – fight, scared). They are found in dense woodland and forest habitats where they feed on fruit, insects, snails, leaf buds and aloe nectar. Sombre Greenbulls are monogamous and build a thin cup nest which is well concealed in foliage about 1-3 metres up. They are parasitized by the Jacobin Cuckoos.

John McFarlane, author of the regular Muse bird feature enjoys the company of garden birds at his home in Pinewood Village. He has the usual bird feeders for seed and fruit and a bird bath to attract a variety of birds. His time spent in game parks including Kruger National Park is always rewarded with plenty of bird sightings.



THE ARTIFICIAL DIVIDE BETWEEN ARTS AND SCIENCES

In this edition, with an education, feature, I notice that schools have placed articles raising the importance of creative and performing arts as an essential part of a child's education and development. In my living memory, it used to be that academics were the sole focus of teaching. Arts and theatrics were just for a bit of entertainment and fun, but thankfully that narrow approach has gradually given way to a much more rounded schooling journey.

It occurs to me that this transition has happened before in history... The five or so centuries of the Dark Ages were characterised by stagnation of progress in arts, literature and intellectual thought and debate was repressed. Those in various disciplines were kept isolated in their silos, constrained by all powerful religious and feudal dictates that could not be questioned. Unsurprisingly, that approach was mirrored in the "education" of young minds.

It was not until the Renaissance (rebirth) period around the 15th Century that Europe broke the shackles of narrow thought – a period of fervent mingling of diverse persons, beliefs and subjects then led to rapid and significant advances in science, the arts and literature. It was also the golden age of exploration as curiosity about the world was reignited.

This period gave rise to the term "Renaissance Man" to describe anyone with an interest in and mastery of a variety of disparate fields. Leonardo da Vinci was perhaps the poster child of the term – an artist, inventor, engineer, scientist, architect and mathematician. Scholars of those days, studying under tutors were exposed to many new ideas and novel approaches to problems from the artistic and scientific worlds, leading to breakthroughs in understanding in both subjects.

When I think back to a key point in my education in the AEB system at the age of 14, when we were guided into either the arts or science stream, according to exam results in that year, I am sure that I was not yet ready to be channelled. One can always take a renaissance approach with your own private studies later as an adult, but life often gets in the way of this. So I endorse the longer exposure to a wider range of subjects in a young person's school years. It can only stand them in good stead throughout their life journeys.

I hope you enjoy this edition.

Max Schutte

Editor and Advertising
Max Schutte

Writer and Photographer
Glynnis Schutte

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● muse@pinelandsdirectory.co.za



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The Muse reserves the right to select articles for inclusion and to make alterations to submitted contributions.

NEXT EDITION

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Content: 19 Sept

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Call Joan on 082 810 1889.

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For more info call the library at 021 814 1780.

Thur 11 & Wed 17 Sept 2025
PAGE TURNERS BOOK CLUB

At the Pinelands Library Committee Room from 10:00 to 11:00 for a chat with authors:
Thursday 11th: Meet Mogamat Salie, author of *Navigating my Autism & ADHD: Vignettes, Poems & Conversations*.

Wednesday 17th: Meet Penny Haw, author of *Follow me to Africa* and *The invincible Miss Cust*. RSVP: Verna 021 814 1780.

Wednesdays (see dates below)
CANSA SUPPORT GROUP

Meet in the committee room at Pinelands Library on the last Wednesday of the month from 10:00 to 12:00. Meet various guest speakers. **Dates: August 27; September NO sessions; October 29; November 26.**

Call Abedda 083 645 6460 or Cheryl 079 848 5794.

Wednesday 17 Sept 2025
PINELANDS STAMP CIRCLE

Meet at 18:30 in the Pinelands Library Activities Hall above the Pinelands Library. Exhibitor: Andrew Mackenzie will provide an exhibit of his late Dad's called "Scotland." (This meeting is early due to the PH on the 24th). Email Martin: m.tristan.crawford@gmail.com.

Wed 17 to Sat 20 Sept 2025
SGGS PLAY - "THE AUDITIONS"

St George's Grammar School proudly presents their prep school play, featuring all pupils from Pre-R to Grade 7. A show full of fun and talent not to be missed! 7 pm in the Geof Burton Hall. Tickets available on Quicket or www.sggs.co.za.

Fri 3 Oct and Sat 4 Oct 2025
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Send content for the October 2025 edition by 19 September 2025.
Publication will be 30 September 2025
R180 ensures placement in the calendar.

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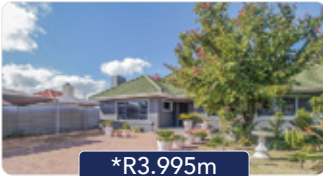
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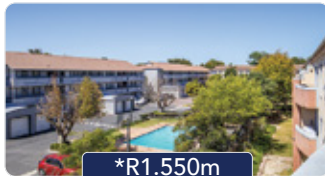
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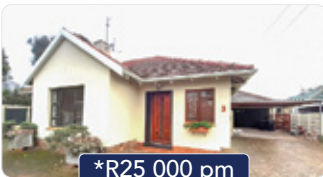


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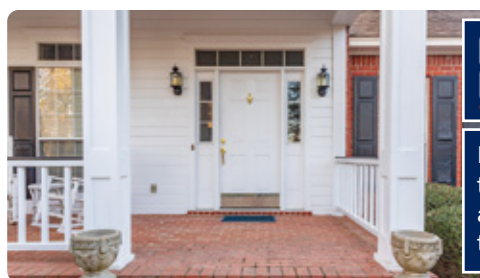
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Preparing the "Whole Child" for Grade 1



By Samantha Anderson

Principal
La Gratitude
Pre-primary School



Preparation for school in Grade R

Transitioning from preschool or Grade R into Grade 1 is a significant milestone – not just for young learners, but for their families too. Ever since the Basic Education Laws Amendment Act of 2024 made Grade R compulsory for all children, getting ready for Grade 1 has become more important than ever. Rather than seeing this transition as a single event, schools and families can think of it as a journey – one that prepares children emotionally, socially, physically, linguistically, and cognitively for the adventure ahead.

Tracking school readiness

At our school, we've learned that kids who feel ready in all these ways do much better when the school year begins. We follow the CAPS curriculum in Grade R, blending play-based activities, thematic lessons, and observational assessment tools – to track each child's growth across multiple areas. This helps teachers spot where a child might need extra support before stepping into a more structured Grade 1 classroom.

Ensuring emotional readiness

Emotional readiness plays a huge role too – some would argue the most important one. For many little ones, starting Grade 1 means saying goodbye for the day to parents and caregivers, meeting new peers, adjusting to new rules and routines, and all of this in a much larger environment than they're used to. Parents can help bridge this gap by talking openly about school feelings, role-playing scenarios like greeting a teacher or asking a friend to play, and modelling calm responses. These small

moments build confidence and emotional resilience in ways that matter just as much as academics.

Developing good communication skills

Strong language and communication skills are the heart of classroom success. Being able to share ideas clearly, follow multi-step instructions, and jump into storytelling conversations, such as the telling of weekend news, lays the foundation for learning and connection. Families can support this by reading together, asking questions like "What happened first?" or "What do you think will happen next?" and playing games focused on sounds, rhymes, high frequency words and following the flow of a story (sequencing). Encouraging home-language use alongside English can also strengthen comprehension and foster bilingualism, especially given our country's language diversity.

Meaningful tasks and responsibility

At home, small routines also help to build independence. For example, packing and unpacking schoolbags, dressing themselves, labelling items, and setting bedtime and breakfast routines. These steps may seem simple, but over time they empower children to take small responsibilities in stride – so that they feel confident when Grade 1 expectations arrive.

Pre-term orientation with parents

Introducing children gently to the school environment reduces anxiety and builds excitement. Visiting the Grade 1 classroom, walking through the school, meeting the teacher, even seeing the school gate, gives them a sneak peek and makes them feel

more confident and comfortable when the first day of school arrives.

Parents are essential partners in this journey. That's why school orientation sessions help families understand what Grade 1 will look like: CAPS syllabuses, daily routines, assessment approaches, and how they can reinforce learning at home. Attending as many of these offerings as possible will help and guide parents to gain a comprehensive understanding of the educational framework and expectations for their children.

In addition to the above, orientation sessions help to create a collaborative relationship between parents and educators. They offer a platform for open communication, allowing parents to voice concerns, ask questions, and stay informed about their child's educational journey. This partnership is crucial in creating a supportive learning environment that extends beyond the classroom.

Grade R preparation for Grade 1 matters

So why all this effort? Because how a child starts in Grade 1 matters. Grade 1 isn't just about academics, it's about nurturing and supporting the whole child, empowering parents, and building a supportive foundation. Children who arrive not only academically prepared, but emotionally grounded, socially confident, and independent are better able to keep pace through primary school, and they are more resilient when faced with new challenges.

When schools and families work together, that's the gift we give them. ■

67 Blankets For Mandela Day

"67 Blankets for Mandela Day", a charity organisation, will be visiting Happy Hour in October at the Pinelands Library. Your donations of wool, hooks and needles would be gratefully received along with the offer to knit or crochet squares to make blankets or scarves for those in need.

11 years ago, Zelda la Grange challenged Carolyn Steyn, founder of 67 Blankets, to make 67 blankets in honour of Madiba's passing. During Christmas time her sister reminded her of her pledge and brought her a hook and a ball of wool. Carolyn soon realized she would need help to complete the task. She turned to social media and asked who would like to help her. The

response was overwhelming and thus 67 Blankets was born. The organisation has ambassadors nationally and internationally. "I got involved almost ten years ago through my ambassador and friend Sandi King", said Ruth Ely. "We meet at libraries, coffee shops, and schools and promote our movement at shopping malls to encourage donations of wool, squares and any unfinished projects. We have many 'knitwits' on board with the will, but not always the wool to make squares."

See www.67blankets.co.za or email info@67blankets.co.za.

Wool donations can be left anytime at Pinelands Library. ■



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COMMUNITY NEWS

EISTEDDFOD SUCCESS!

In August 2025, 15 Cannons Creek Independent Primary School pupils in Grade 4-6 participated in the Speech category of the Cape Town Eisteddfod held at the Wave Theatre. The event showcased individual talent through solo poetry recitals and reading. "I am very impressed with our pupils. Their hard work and enthusiasm paid off" said Mrs Sharon Jellicoe (Head of Debating).

CUM LAUDE Awards: (96 to 100%):

Lilliana Louw & Scarlett Kooyman

GOLD Awards:

Gemma Kalu, Rae Dorasamy, Shura Naidoo, Keira Nivison, Nicole Kritzinger and Thayer Ramlal

HONOURS Awards:

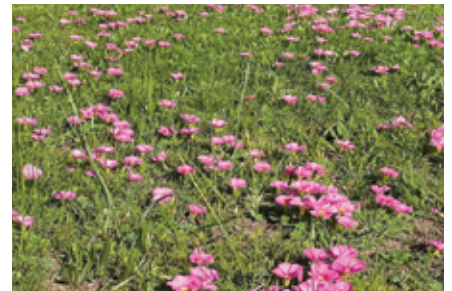
Claire Williams, Olivia Shadwell, Zara Madaramoothoo, Charlotte Duncan, Clarice Broadley, Jonny Baker and Catherine Tuntuwa.



RE-WILDING A GARDEN IN PINELANDS

Since 2015 Tracy Payne has been re-wilding her garden, in what has been her childhood home since 1967. Her dad, Nigel Payne, designed and built the house and her mom, Cynthia Payne, loved gardening. "It began with a handful of seed I gathered from a patch of rain daisies that had survived the mowing along the banks of the Elsieskraal River. From then on I looked out for anything that was Cape Flats Sand

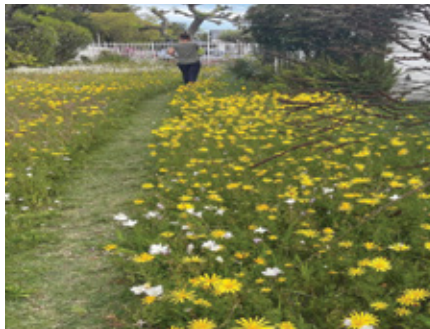
Fynbos – rescuing the following from the mowers: 'Butter Silklilies' Sparaxis bulbifera and peach coloured Moraea. It is amazing how quickly the indigenous plants multiply all by themselves. A couple of years ago I saw a field of yellow Ursinia in Ndabeni and gathered seed there too. I now have a garden that gives the most spectacular show starting to bloom in late May, with everything gone to seed by December".



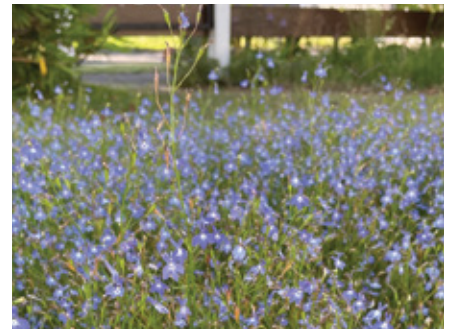
Oxalis purpurea flowering late May, continuing through June and July



The first 'rain daisies' Dimorph pluvialis start blooming in early August and are at their best early/mid September.



'Rain daisies' the 'Star of the Veldt' Ursinia anthemoides come into bloom, peaking in early October. Photo by Sandy Brice.



And finally the 'Garden Lobelia', Lobelia erinus, bloom in November and December, when everything else is going to seed



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EDUCATION & CHILDCARE SPECIAL FEATURE

September 2025 | the muse | 7

the **muse**
community magazine

More Than a Performance: The Power of Drama in Prep School

Nurturing the whole child

At St George's Grammar School, we believe in nurturing the whole child — academically, socially, emotionally, and creatively. In our Prep School, drama plays a meaningful role as an extra-mural activity that sparks imagination, builds confidence, and brings joy to our pupils.

The impact of drama

Our Intermediate Phase teacher, Ms Clara Machado, leads drama lessons for both Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase pupils. She reflects on the impact it has:

"Drama provides a fantastic way for children to learn about collaboration and communication. We have the best time in our drama lessons, learning how to express ourselves both verbally and physically. Drama is all about inclusion — every child is an active participant, and we embrace diversity, not only the special things that make us individuals but also the things that bring us together. I have seen children blossom with confidence and demonstrate a wonderful sense of community both

inside, and out, of the performance space."

This year's play - *The Auditions*

This year's Prep School play, *The Auditions*, (17 to 20 September) is a celebration of that spirit of collaboration, inclusion and sense of community. The play was written by the Prep School Principal, Ms Shamla Maistry, who is also the director.

The story: With the news that St George will be visiting Cape Town, the children pull out all the stops to give him the grandest welcome to our beautiful city of Cape Town! From Pre-Primary to Grade 7, pupils will showcase their talents in a fun, heart-warming performance packed with singing, dancing, laughter, and surprises. Being entertained by a school full of talent, our panels of judges will certainly have a tough time deciding on the best act — and there may even be a few unexpected performances along the way!

The Auditions promises to be a delightful reminder of the power of performance to unite and uplift. ■

By Chantal Prince

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Cannons Creek @ the Eisteddfod

Cannons Creek Independent Primary School recently took part in the prestigious Cape Town Drama Eisteddfod, held at the Wave Theatre. The school entered the Grade 4, 5, and 6 Drama Clubs where each group delivered exceptional performances, earning scores in the 96-100% category and achieving Cum Laude - the highest level of recognition. The Grade 6 group were invited to perform again at the final Prize-giving held on Friday 8 August, as they were the overall best within their section. The plays were originals, written by Drama Teacher, Mrs Terri Theys - *Pandora's Box*, *The Imperial Palace*, and *The Great Sword Squabble of Splottenshire*.

Hard work and team effort

"Their success is a testament to their dedication and commitment. Many of our pupils even attended extra rehearsals during the holidays to ensure they were performance-ready. We would like to extend a sincere thank you to all parents for their continued support and for providing the wonderful costumes that helped bring each play to life," said Mrs Terri Theys, Drama Teacher.

An opportunity to perform

The Eisteddfod is a well-regarded event that brings together schools and drama studios from across the city to celebrate the performing arts. Participants showcase a wide range of dramatic disciplines, including group and solo poetry, monologues, duologues, and more. While the event provides a grading framework, its purpose is not competition but rather



Above: Danyal Christensen and Elijah Hyland share a proud moment after receiving their medals at the Prize-giving.

to give students an opportunity to perform on a public platform and develop their craft. On stage our pupils demonstrated outstanding collaboration, confidence, and professionalism.

Comments from the adjudicator, Ms Carey Hickson-Mahony:

"This is a well-prepared performance, I love your costumes! You worked hard to add dynamic staging and your reactions are spectacular. Great vocal work – both in role delivery and choral work." – Grade 6

"Excellent work, reactions and facial play! I wish this wonderful performance could have gone on for longer! This was exceptionally entertaining - a very polished performance. Energy to the max!" – Grade 5
"You all deliver with excellent timing and draw us into the story with exceptional facial expression and strong vocals. I love your staging – such brilliant visuals. Great team work!" – Grade 4. ■

From Deidre McCrindle, Cannons Creek.



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Left: Main cast. Above Grade 5. Below Staff



From Outer Space to Centre Stage — bravery, creativity, dancing and memories made to last a lifetime. During the first week of August, the stage at Pinelands North Primary School was transformed into outer space as pupils, staff, and parents came together to present an original production, *Astronauts vs Aliens*. Written by PNPS staff members, the spectacular show left the community buzzing with pride.

Astronauts vs Aliens blasted audiences into an hilarious intergalactic cultural exchange between the human Novax family and the alien Xylar family. What began as a friendly, albeit slightly awkward, visit quickly turned into chaos when rogue robots caused mayhem, testing everyone's patience, problem-solving skills and sense of humour. Through misunderstandings, laughter and

teamwork, the two families discovered that even across galaxies, friendship was the most powerful force of all.

This extraordinary play celebrated courage, creativity, and teamwork across the entire school community. From Grade R through to Grade 7, whether acting, dancing, helping with props, or supporting behind the scenes — every child was given a role suited to their strengths. A truly memorable highlight for the audience was the moment the staff and parents took to the stage and showcased their dance moves. The children were in awe!

For many pupils, this was their very first time performing on stage, and the bravery they showed in front of a full audience was inspiring. They discovered that courage isn't a lack of fear and nerves, but rather

about showing up, trying something new, and supporting one another.

In the lead-up to the performances, rehearsals became a space for growth and discovery, showing that learning can take place beyond books and the classroom. Our children gained confidence, learnt to manage their time, and encouraged one another. Behind the scenes, friendships flourished, and leadership skills emerged, while having plenty of fun.

PNPS couldn't be prouder of every child, parent, and staff member who made *Astronauts vs Aliens* a shining success. The stars weren't only in the sky that week — they were right here in Pinelands, lighting up the PNPS stage. ■

From Keachell Jeffery, PNPS.

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We believe education is more than academics — it's about nurturing the whole child. Our thriving Arts and Culture programmes inspire creativity, confidence, and collaboration, giving every learner the chance to shine.

From Foundation Phase through to the Intermediate and Senior Phase, our pupils enjoy a rich variety of artistic experiences. These include art lessons that encourage imagination and self-expression, drama and music classes for all, and individual lessons in violin, guitar, drumming, piano, recorder, and more. We also offer choir and voice training for budding vocalists, and our lively Marimba Band recently made history, with others, in a Guinness World Record performance.

We also proudly host two major annual events that highlight our learners' talents: the biannual school play - a theatrical extravaganza where our young actors, dancers, and backstage crew collaborate to bring magical productions to life - and the Red-A-Fair, our vibrant community festival filled with music, art, and joyful performances.

Our cultural commitment has earned recognition well beyond our school grounds. As an example; in the Cape Town Virtual Eisteddfod, numerous Pinelands North pupils received top individual awards for their outstanding performances in the various music categories. At Pinelands North, every child has the chance to discover and develop their artistic voice, whether it's through strumming a guitar, acting on stage, painting a masterpiece, or keeping the rhythm on a marimba. We're more than a school — we're a creative community.

At PNPS, the arts aren't an extra; they're part of who we are.

Pinelands High Shines in *Legally Blonde: The Musical*



In August, Pinelands High School staged a vibrant production of *Legally Blonde: The Musical*. Directed by Ms Tara Notcutt, with Mrs Eloise Jurgens as Musical Director and choreography by Mrs Cleo Notcutt-Williams, the talented 60-member cast delighted audiences with humour, lively music, and energetic dance.

Comment from Director Ms Tara Notcutt:

"It is always a thrill and a pleasure to work with teenagers on a big production, and *Legally Blonde: The Musical* was no exception. Cleo and I have collaborated on four productions for Pinelands High School and *Legally Blonde* is one of our favourites. A big reason for this was the enthusiasm with which every student threw themselves into the show, not

just the leads. Everyone on stage was fully committed to each moment, whether it was singing a solo, delivering a line, or simply bringing on a table for the next scene. Every contribution mattered, and the students understood that no matter how small their role seemed, they were part of a team creating something much bigger. That, to me, is the most beautiful part of working on a production like this.

Comment by Musical Director Eloise Jurgens:

Choosing *Legally Blonde* as our school's musical was a bold and intentional move! This musical was a celebration of strength, smarts, and owning who you are, all wrapped up in high-energy choreography and complex musical arrangements. The show's demanding score, rapid scene

transitions, and stylistic diversity - from upbeat pop songs to emotional ballads posed a thrilling challenge for the PHS orchestra.

Our musicians were made up in part with students from the school, as well as professional musicians. They embraced the score's intricacies with tireless rehearsals and real team spirit and their dedication paid off in a production that radiated confidence, precision, and joy. Elle Woods' (lead character) journey was brought to life with style and heart. Every note and nuance reflected the heart of our school community: bold, brilliant, and proudly passionate. *Legally Blonde* wasn't just a musical - it was a message, and one we delivered with pride. ■



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How disability cover protects your future



By
Sue Torr
Director
Crue Invest

Life doesn't stand still, and neither do the risks we face. As we grow older, change careers, take on more debt, or expand our families, our exposure to financial vulnerability increases. If an illness or injury were to prevent you from earning an income, either temporarily or permanently, how would you manage financially? Would your family be able to meet their monthly commitments? Would your children's school fees be paid? If your income is irregular or you're the primary breadwinner, the stakes are even higher.

Understanding what cover you have in place is a vital first step. Disability insurance typically comes in two forms: income protection and lump-sum cover. Review all policies you hold, including those offered by your employer, and pay particular attention to the definitions and exclusions in your policy documents. Some policies cover only accidental disability, excluding illness-related conditions like cancer or stroke. Others may contain waiting periods, usually between 7 and 90 days, before income benefits kick in. If your policy has a long waiting period, ensure you have emergency savings to cover the gap. Also, take note of expiry dates, especially if your cover ends before your planned retirement age.

In many cases, policyholders assume their cover is sufficient, only to discover limitations at claims stage. This is where disclosure becomes crucial. When applying for cover, it's essential to provide full and accurate information about your health, lifestyle, occupation, and income. Non-disclosure remains one of the most common reasons for claim repudiation, and it can have devastating consequences. If your circumstances have changed since taking out the policy — perhaps you've started smoking, taken up a high-risk sport, or your income has fluctuated — it's your responsibility to update your insurer. Income protection benefits are often calculated based on your most recent income, so failing to keep this updated may result in an underpayment.

The long-term financial impact of disability is not always obvious at first glance. If you are permanently unable to work, your ability to save for retirement may be compromised.

In such a case, it's worth allocating a portion of your lump-sum disability cover to replace lost retirement contributions. This may involve calculating the capital you would have needed to fund your retirement had you not become disabled, adjusted for inflation and expected returns. While income protection covers your immediate needs, lump-sum cover remains a valuable tool for funding long-term capital shortfalls.

Disability also comes with its own set of costs that are not typically covered by medical aid. These may include prosthetic limbs, home modifications, mobility aids, private care, or vehicle adaptations. Even moderate impairments can incur significant expenses, particularly if your condition requires long-term rehabilitation or your family needs to adjust their lifestyle to care for you. These costs should be factored into your overall cover.

It's also important to remember that your need for disability cover will evolve over time. As your investments grow and debts are paid off, you may find that you no longer need the same level of capital cover. However, don't be too quick to cancel your policy as reinstating cover at a later stage, especially if your health has changed, can be prohibitively expensive or even impossible. As such, a gradual reduction might be more appropriate than an outright cancellation.

Planning for disability is not about fear — it's about foresight. None of us likes to imagine being unable to work, but facing the financial realities of disability before it happens can make all the difference. The true value of disability insurance lies not only in replacing income but in protecting your financial independence, shielding your assets, and reducing the emotional and financial burden on those you love.

Disability cover is not a one-size-fits-all solution, and your needs will change as your life does. Review your policies regularly, stay honest with your insurer, and work closely with your financial advisor to ensure that your cover continues to serve your best interests. When it comes to protecting your future, thoughtful preparation today is your greatest defence against life's uncertainties. ■

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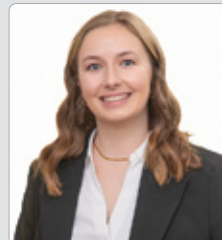
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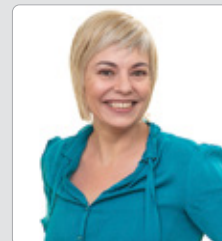
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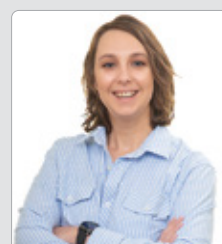
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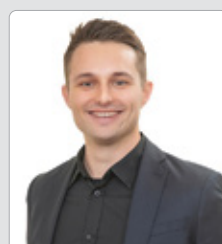
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Malta



By Brian Watkyns

Skyline of Valletta from Grand Harbour

Malta has always held a fascination for me as my life's story began, literally, with my mom's pregnancy while my parents lived at the Malta Royal Naval Base. Malta consists of two islands, Malta and Gozo strategically positioned in the Mediterranean. Malta was granted independence from Great Britain in 1964 and has been a part of the European Union since 2004. In 2016 Ann and I managed to spend a few hours in Malta while on a cruise ship. The ship entered the Grand Harbour at sunrise with the honey-coloured buildings glowing unforgettably in the early morning rays of the sun. We vowed to come back.

Day 1

Nine years later, in 2025 our plane landed in the capital, Valletta, the first planned city in Europe, built by the Knights of St John, who controlled Malta from 1500-1700. Our BnB in the centre of the city, as with many houses, had a basement for water storage due to limited freshwater resources and a reliance on desalination.

Day 2

The next morning, we joined a free walking tour which we had booked online with Guru Walk (highly recommended). These tours are available in all major towns and cities and while free, they encourage a donation at the tour's end. Although our tour was in English, our guide was fluent in Maltese which consists of 60% Arabic, 30% Italian, and a 10% mix of other languages. Both English and Maltese are taught in school on a 50/50 basis.

The tour took us to all the main attractions where we learnt about the history, food and culture. Malta is 98% Roman Catholic with 365 churches for a population of only 574 346 (2024). Imagine – you can go to a different church every day of the year! Being a very religious country, divorces were only legalised in 2011.

The tour stopped at the Upper Barrakka Gardens in time to watch the firing of the noon day gun. From here we could see amazing views of the opposite side of the Grand Harbour known as The Three Cities.

After the tour, we boarded a bus paying the flat fee of €2 a journey. There are no trains on the island. We intended visiting St Paul's Bay, the supposed site of St. Paul's shipwreck, but we were told by the locals that it had become too touristy, so we opted to go on to nearby Mellieha. The Mellieha Parish Church is a stunning hilltop building with spectacular views over the coast. The National Shrine of Our Lady of Mellieha displays a beautiful fresco dating back to the 13th Century. Across the road is the Grotto of the Madonna which is a chapel in a cave carved out of the rock. Unfortunately, the nearby Air Raid Shelters from WW2, also carved into the rock, were closed. We did however enjoy the famous Maltese soft drink called Kinnie, a blend of orange and aromatic herbs.

That evening we savoured a traditional supper at Nenu Baker but avoided the national dish of fried Maltese rabbit with garlic! After supper we took a leisurely evening walk through Valletta's narrow streets, which had come alive with animated young and old people.



Ann Watkyns at Nenu Baker

Day 3

Today's pre-booked tour took us to the Hal Saflieni Hypogeum which dates back some 5 000 years and was accidentally discovered only in 1902. It is a series of underground caves hewn out of limestone. Constructed on three levels, it became a burial ground for over 700 bodies with various artifacts. It was incredible to consider how these underground caves could be dug with prehistoric tools. Our visit was slightly marred by the museum guide who rushed us through the caves.

Next, we walked to St. John's Co-Cathedral (named thus as there are 2 cathedrals on the island), and viewed the gilded ceilings and Caravaggio's famous painting of the beheading of St. John the Baptist. Outside the Cathedral there was the ongoing protest about the assassination of Daphne Galizia in 2017, an investigative journalist, who uncovered a network of corruption. The last of those involved in her murder were sentenced soon after we had left.

Then we went on to a much smaller church known as Church of St Paul's Shipwreck built in 1570. The shipwreck of Paul on the island while on his way to Rome to stand trial is described in the New Testament. On display in the church is Paul's wrist bone



Nightlife in the city



Inside St John's Co-Cathedral

and part of the column on which Paul was beheaded in Rome (supposedly). From Valletta, we walked to The Three Cities, visiting the medieval Fort St Angelo, which was partly used in the TV series, *Game of Thrones*. A highlight was the Malta at War Museum, including a tour of an underground air raid shelter. During WW2 Malta was continually bombed and blockaded resulting in residents sometimes spending days in the shelter. Malta is the only country to ever receive the George Cross for bravery.

When it started raining, we hoped to return to Valletta via gondola across the Grand Harbour. However, the gondoliers were not working due to the possibility of rain damage, so we used the ferry instead.

Day 4

We were up early on our last day and at 8 am hopped on the bus for a 45-minute drive to the medieval walled City of Mdina which was the original capital of Malta. Set on a hilltop, the city was built by the Phoenicians in the 8th Century BC but later fell under the Romans. The defensive wall had been built in 870 after the Ottoman Empire took control of Malta. Mdina became the capital under Byzantine rule and then under Norman rule. With the arrival of the Knights of St John after the great siege of 1565, Valletta replaced Mdina as the capital.

I felt like I'd stepped back in time with the maze of narrow, quiet, car-free streets set among the honey-coloured buildings. This city was also used in the filming of *Game of Thrones*. We visited St. Paul's Cathedral which dominates the skyline, then walked on the wall surrounding the old city which offered panoramic views. Arriving back in Valletta we made our way to the National Museum of Archaeology. Built in 1571 for the Knights of the Order of St. John, the museum has artifacts from the Neolithic period (5 200 BC) to the Phoenician era (8th–6th century BC) including a Phoenician sarcophagus emphasizing Malta as a Phoenician outpost. This reminded me of the yet to be proven rumour of a Phoenician boat in Pinelands.

A visit is highly recommended. ■



Scan here to read about the Pinelands Phoenician Mystery

Or go to Brian Watkyns article on the Pinelands History website at <https://pinelandshistory.co.za/phoenician-mystery/>



Above:

Guns overlooking the Grand Harbour. Note the flower bed depicting the Maltese cross, an emblem used by the Knights of St John who helped the poor and the sick in the 11th and 12th centuries. The Knights of St John were significant in the rescue of the Island of Malta during the crusades. The Maltese Cross with its 8 points is a symbol of protection and encompasses bravery, honour, compassion, charity, chivalry generosity, loyalty and reflects the one who would lay their life down for another.

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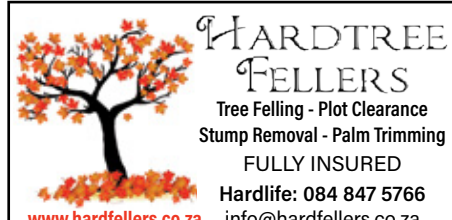
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By **Heleen Meyer**

Pinelands resident, foodie and author of *Food from the Heart*, and *Make five/Maak vyf*.

Moroccan couscous

Serves 6 to 8

50 g flaked almonds
1 onion, halved and thinly sliced
500 g butternut, peeled and cubed
5 ml (1 tsp) cumin seeds
90-100 ml olive oil
salt and pepper to taste
500 ml (2 cups) uncooked couscous
500 ml (2 cups) hot chicken or veggie stock
5 ml (1 tsp) ground cumin
2,5 ml (½ tsp) ground cinnamon
15 ml (1 tbsp) finely grated lemon rind
30 ml (2 tbsp) coarsely chopped fresh mint leaves
30 ml (2 tsp) coarsely chopped fresh coriander leaves
a handful of extra fresh herbs for garnish

1. Preheat oven to 200 °C. Arrange almonds in a single layer on a baking tray and roast for a few minutes until golden brown—take care, as these can easily burn. Set aside.
2. Mix the onion, butternut and cumin seeds together in a bowl and stir in about 30 ml of the oil and season the veggies to taste. Spoon in an even layer onto the same baking tray.
3. Roast veggies for 30-40 minutes, or until just cooked and golden brown, but not too soft.
4. Meanwhile, place couscous in a large, flat dish. Pour the hot stock over. Cover and allow to stand for 5 minutes. Then fluff with a big fork to break up any lumps.
5. Stir the remaining oil with the spices, lemon rind and chopped herbs into the couscous.
6. Add the roasted veggies and gently toss through. Add the nuts, season to taste and garnish with extra herbs. Serve hot or at room temperature with a protein of your choice.



Portrait and food shot: Adel Ferrira
Food image: courtesy of LiG Magazine

A lekker braai side

You know what they say about couscous? 'It's so nice, they named it twice ...'

I developed this aromatic couscous recipe with its Moroccan flavours and lovely textures many moons ago. Over the years, I started making it with bulgar wheat or even quinoa to prepare something 'new' every time.

Despite what many think, couscous is not a grain or seed of a plant, but indeed a man-made wheat flour product, very similar to pasta. It's a popular ingredient in North African and Mediterranean dishes. It has a neutral taste, with the ability to absorb other flavours, making it extra versatile. Bulgar wheat is also manufactured, but is less refined, with more protein and fibre and a lovely nutty flavour. If you want to go the gluten-free route, then quinoa is a great option, and it's also a wonderful source of plant-

based protein. Use about a cup of bulgar wheat or quinoa for this recipe.

Couscous, bulgar wheat and quinoa are all quick to prepare. To keep it fluffy, I prefer to just soak couscous in a shallow dish with an equal amount of hot water – as in this recipe. Bulgar wheat and quinoa both cook in about 10-15 minutes, by boiling in a pot, like rice. All three options are delicious served with saucy dishes and great to use as the base for a side dish like this one.

Have this on your next braai menu – it's as delicious with chicken, pork or red meat, and extra good with lamb for a special occasion. You can decide whether to serve this warm or at room temperature. Prepare everything in advance to make things easier and just toss it together an hour or two before the meal. Keep the almonds aside till just before serving, to retain their crunchiness.

Lekker braai!

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Sharon Van Rensburg properties



info@svrproperties.co.za | www.svrproperties.co.za
www.property24.com | www.pinelandsdirectory.co.za



Christo & Sharon Van Rensburg

Christo Van Rensburg: 076 164 4483
Sharon Van Rensburg: 082 920 2217
Jacqui Piper: 021 531 3464
(Office Administrator)

*All prices are asking prices

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Sharon van Rensburg Properties is a family-owned business established in February 2005 by Sharon and Christo and is a leading brand name.

With their joint experience of over 50 YEARS in property, knowledge and personal dedication to their clients, they are a winning combination.



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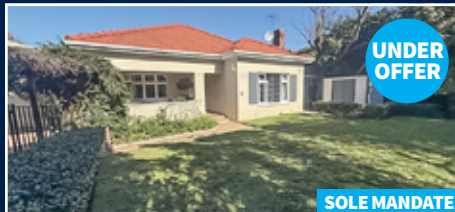
Our team is expanding and moving to larger offices – just around the corner!

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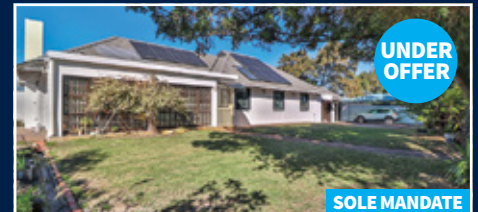
For more info contact us on **021 531 3041**



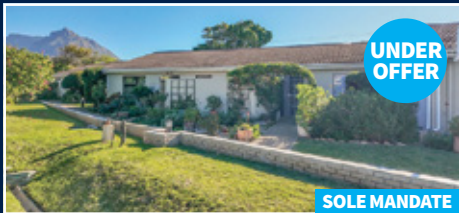
Pinelands | RL46461 | R6,200,000



Pinelands | RL47595 | R5,200,000



Pinelands | RL45533 | R4,200,000



Pinelands | RL44647 | R3,300,000



Pinelands | RL48501 | R25,000 pm



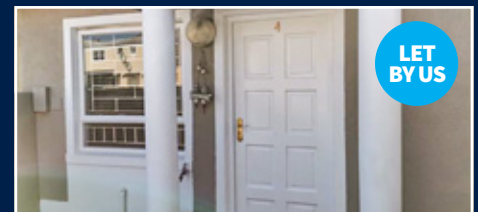
Thornton | RL45940 | R1,699,000



Thornton | RL45950 | R1,595,000



Thornton | RL49257 | R680,000



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Dave Brown
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