



TRUST NEWS

Summer 2021

Trust celebrates 30th year helping students in need



A small group of five alumni living in the UK gathered at an office in Snow Hill in the City of London on 4th January 1991 with a simple objective – to set up a charity to raise funds to help needy students at the University. They believed fellow alumni in the UK would want to support such an effort, recognizing the massive challenges facing those from low-income households wanting a university education.

The group went on to register the Trust as a charity in England and Wales in July that year and started with the modest ambition of providing bursaries for one or two students. A letter was sent to alumni in the UK, highlighting the loss to communities and South Africa when capable people were unable to pursue university studies because they could not afford fees or living costs.

The letter recounted the stories of two young people, named only as Mlungisi and Judith, who had been unable to attend university because of the cost, despite showing promise at school. The Trust's appeal struck a chord with alumni who wanted to help – and, within a few years, it was able to assist many more needy students than originally envisaged.



Now, in its 30th year, the Trust is providing help for 15 students through bursaries and top-up allowances in 2021. Over three ->

TRUSTEES: Roger Smith (Chair); Erin Bargate (Secretary); Richard Cooper (Treasurer); Penny Holmes; Tess Marsh; Colin Morgan.

POSTAL ADDRESS: Church House, Yr Allt, Llantrisant, Pontyclun, CF72 8EF.

Web: www.ukznuktrust.org Tel: 07968 142671 E-mail: info@ukznuktrust.org

30th anniversary celebrated...

-> decades, the Trust has been able to give support to around 350 needy students in total, all of them with stories similar to those of Mlungisi and Judith.

The five alumni at that January 1991 meeting were: Granville Easter, Hugh Parry, Will Simpson, Margaret Thomas and Colin Turpin. They could have had little idea at the time how their efforts would pay off in the years that have followed. Thanks to them, their successors as trustees, and alumni and supporters in the UK, the Trust has been able to make a difference to the lives of the students it helps and, hopefully, to their communities and South Africa.

As the Trust celebrates its 30th anniversary, the need to help students from low-income households remains as great as ever. *Please **give generously** to help support the Trust's students. Use the accompanying donation form or go to: ukznuktrust.org/donate/*

Letter from 1991

The Trust's letter sent to alumni in the UK in 1991 asked them to help give a start "for some young person who would otherwise face an unpromising future".

Citing the "true stories" of Mlungisi and Judith, it said Mlungisi's talent was spotted at primary school: "It was obvious he should go on to high school but his family could not afford it. The head teacher, believing in his ability, collected the necessary money from the local community and he was able to matriculate.

"But that was as far as he was able to get. University was not for him. He had to go to work at once to help support the family so, instead of becoming a professional man, he has had to spend his days in a dull, poorly-paid job."

Judith's story is a similar one: "She too came from a very poor background and relied on bursaries to get through to matric. She was then granted some financial help by the University and began her course in Durban where she soon showed she had exceptional ability.

"Unfortunately, she couldn't manage on the assistance she was given, had to leave and is now doing a menial job supporting herself and helping her family."

The letter called for donations to the Trust "to help avoid this human waste". Some of the language might have changed since then but the issues remain.

Valoshnee Gounden, first recipient of Margaret Thomas award in 2007, reflects on the Trust's help

The trustees are delighted to have been in recent communication with Valoshnee Gounden, the first student to be awarded the Trust bursary set up in memory of trustee Margaret Thomas in 2007.

Valoshnee, who is now living in London, has expressed her gratitude to the Trust and its donors for the difference the Trust's assistance has made to her life.

She says: "As a child of rural KwaZulu-Natal, I held onto the dream of attending university even in the face of financial adversity. I was accepted at university through securing financial aid, which meant my future began in debt.



"The Margaret Thomas Bursary freed me from debt and the worry of needing to secure aid each year. With my focus on my education, I went on to graduate First Class (Cum Laude)."

Valoshnee then worked as a teacher for five years, "helping to shape the lives of many students". She declares: "Through me, your generosity has touched the lives of many others."

She says: "Life's journey has brought me to London, where I practise as a trainer for a reputable professional services firm.

"I owe the Trust a debt of gratitude for providing me with the foundation upon which I have been able to build a brighter future."

▣ **Margaret Thomas** (nee Dent), who passed away in 2006 after a long illness, was a driving force behind the Trust. She helped found the charity in 1991 and served as Secretary and later as Chair. She is fondly remembered as a lecturer and teacher of English who inspired many students, pupils and colleagues.

The bursary set up in her memory was changed to scholarship in 2011 to ensure that it could be retained by the student to whom it had been awarded even if they later obtained other funding. The scholarship is awarded to a student of the humanities in view of Margaret's own background. The list of recipients of the scholarship since 2011 can be found on the Trust's website.

Tribute paid to role of University bodies and staff in helping Trust's work

The Trust is a small, independent charity but has been fortunate to have had the cooperation and assistance of the University's Student Funding Centre, the UKZN Foundation and the Alumni Relations team over the years.

The SFC plays a crucial role in administering the Trust's help to needy students in the form of bursaries, the Margaret Thomas Scholarship, and book and meal top-up allowances. The

Foundation ensures the Trust's funding is delivered as intended, while the Alumni Relations team assists with communications.



The trustees are grateful to staff at these bodies for their support and for their guidance when policy changes have been needed in the light of changing circumstances. The trustees wish to thank Prof Anesh Maniraj Singh, who stood down recently as director of the Foundation, and to wish him well for the future.

☐ Stories on some of the 15 students being assisted by the Trust this year will appear in the next issue of Trust News, due in December.

Keep in touch!

Please make sure the UKZN Alumni Relations Office and the Trust have your up-to-date contact details, including email.

Remember to email alumni@ukzn.ac.za and info@ukznuktrust.org with any changes.

Add these two email addresses to your online contacts to avoid our emails being rejected.

Connect with the Trust on social media



Find us on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/UKZNUKTrust

The Trust's postal address

A reminder the Trust changed its mailing address last year to:
Church House, Yr Allt, Llantrisant, Pontyclun, CF72 8EF.
Note the Trust's registered address in Sheffield is unchanged.